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MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SHORT PROSE FICTION

MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SHORT PROSE FICTION

1964

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
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PREFACE

GRANTED that the "Book of Ruth," and the story of the "Forty Thieves" illustrate the fact that the world has always loved a story and sat at the feet of the story-teller, still we do not find the evolution of the short story of the nineteenth century directly traceable to such stories.

When we try to present narrative form of composition to the young student endeavoring to write and brought up on cheap magazines, we do not find that this evolutionary study reaches them. These stories seem to them remote and skeleton tales, not suggesting any immediacy of experience or of imagination. Moreover, they may justly maintain that the plot of *Ruth* and *Naomi,* or of *Ruth* and *Boaz,* is properly a novel plot, demanding the complication of incident which would complete the framework of the story and set it apart from the true short story.

The editors of this collection of Short Stories recognize the fitness of developing the short story from its earlier form in a literary historical study of fiction, but as teachers of composition they hold that a presentation of what Professor Matthews defines as the Short Story is more profitable to classes of composition. Professor Matthews says: "It is in France and the United States, rather than in Great Britain, that we first find the true short story; and we do not find it until the second quarter of the nineteenth century."

It is for the guidance of these young students in composition that the editors of this collection venture to add to the excellent collections already published a volume of various types and special problems of construction in the distinctly modern short story, rather than an evolutionary study for a history of the literature of the subject.

A. V. W.
E. M. T.

WELLESLEY, May, 1910.

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INTRODUCTION

I

THOUGH we recognize that there is no hard and fast line between the expository essay of character such as "The Sir Roger de Coverley" series, or "The Letters of the Chinese Citizen," and the narrative form, for convenience of classification we omit consideration of the character essay and take up narrative forms only, comprising sketch, story, novelette, and drama.

In the sketch we have the simplest narrative form without action, the interest lying in character and atmosphere. The sense of situation is keen. In Daudet's sketch of the "Sous-Prêfet" you breathe spring and lose yourself in the abandonment of sense till, with the "Sous-Prêfet," you are as a bit of moss, or a bird on the tree; but there is no more action than in a lyric—nothing happens—no character is evolved through the happy day—it begins and ends as a song of spring. So, too, in "The Death of the Dauphin" it is not the concrete incident so much as the sense of the abstract—of Death from which not kingly state, nor guard, nor mother's love, can save the little Dauphin. Again action is eliminated, and by iteration of the Dauphin's struggles to evade Death one has the poignancy of the situation—its relentlessness, which serves as a refrain element, and gives the same exquisite blending of poetry and reality that Zola notes as Daudet's distinctive gift. In like manner Turgenev suggests the thought of a short story in "The Living Relic"—that touching sketch of

Lukerya on her death bed. His theme he states at the beginning of the story,

> O native land of long-suffering,
> Land of the Russian people.

And the story is that theme made concrete, but without any progress of action, only the structural progress to a climax of interest in Lukerya, the sufferer. The sketch lacks just that conflict of forces that the short story demands.

The short story may have all the qualities of action that the drama has; and as one listens to a reading of "The Man Who Would Be King," the scenes naturally transfer themselves to a stage. The rapid development through dialogue of Henry James's "Daisy Miller" also calls for a stage. The process by which Henry James himself made the story into a drama throws some light on the relative demands of these two forms. The sketch, then, centers in sense of atmosphere and feeling for the situation. The short story may give this sense of atmosphere just as strongly, but that alone cannot constitute a story. We must have a conflict of forces which results in definite action and outcome. We may say that "The Merry Men" leaves, after a few years, a sense of the wild force of the sea on the people who live on its islands and commune only with the sea and their own consciences. But without the conflict of forces between old Gordon Darnaway's conscience and his sinful joy of possession and conquest, we should have had only a picturesque sketch and not a story. In like manner we may say that the sense of the moors is the strongest element in "Wuthering Heights," or "The Return of the Native"; but that does not make a novel without the lives that grow out of those moors, and are shaped by passions black and violent as the storms that sweep the lonely hills.

In novel and story, such wonderful sense of atmos-

phere is the convincing force quite as much as the character-drawing. In the dramatic short story, like Kipling's "The Man Who Was," the events that pass before your eyes give the sense produced in our previous illustrations through feeling for the scene. The dramatization of such short stories as "The Man Who Was," or "Daisy Miller," point for us the different scope of the stage form. Not atmosphere but characters and action hold us here, in both drama and dramatic short story. The drama loses some of the *finesse* of the short story in missing the author's interpretation of Dirkovitch through Kipling's opening study of the Russian character, more than half Oriental, and its effect upon his Occidental comrades. Henry James's expansion of "Daisy Miller," the story, into "Daisy Miller," the comedy, loses many fine points of interpretation. The story is a more subtly artistic product than the play. The very simplicity of plot in the short story which, supplemented by the author's interpretation of Daisy in her relations to her ineffective mother, the courier, her small brother, makes her a bewildering personality to Winterbourne, must in the comedy for the stage be offset by the conventional Alice Durant—irreproachable but uninteresting—and Winterbourne's detached irresponsibility balanced by the Boston lover of Alice who waits on every one's convenience—"a slight unmeritable man—meet to be sent on errands." Instead of the one delicate insinuation in the story that "the reason of his (Winterbourne's) spending so much time at Geneva was that he was extremely devoted to a lady who lived there—a foreign lady—a person older than himself. Very few Americans—indeed, I think none—had ever seen this lady, about whom there were singular stories"; instead of leaving the rest to our imaginations, the comedy for the stage must give us the whole bald, disillusioning scene of Winterbourne's infatuation for Mme. de Katkoff, her shady past and the courier's knowledge of her

secrets, so that we have all the stage trappings of villains, repentant Magdalene, two pairs of lovers, elderly interfering relatives, which finally work out to a union of all who should be mated as the curtain falls. But no real sense of the inevitableness of the ending convinces the spectator as it does the reader of the story.

When the modern play drops these stage conventions and presents us a drama of thought, as Ibsen does in "The Master Builder," the convincing power of the writer's insight into the working forces of the self-made man Solness is thoroughly real in the first scene with his subordinates in the office. And his mastery by Hilda, the personification of dominating youth and the new generation, is simply and effectively sketched without counterplots, without conventional stage villains, or confidantes, or any of the familiar stage machinery. The similarity between drama and short story is in such plays most evident—the simple structure, quick effective scenes, and short illuminating conversations, with no distraction from the main issue.

The short story with its single dynamic effect easily passes over into the novelette. Turgenev's "Lear of the Steppes" and Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" develop at length what "Mumu" and "Markheim" give in quick impression. The rapid study of dual personality in "Markheim" is certainly far more artistic than the prolonged horror of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"; and "Mumu," the serf of the soil, is unforgettable, while the mind gropes for the tremendous figure of the Russian Lear through many distressing scenes. Strong these novelettes are in deepening an impression, but less artistically perfect than the more compressed form or than the complete novel.

The Russian and French types present interesting differences. The French never presents the amorphous strength that the Russian has only too easily. The fine pointed perfection of Daudet, of Mérimée, or the cold

finish of Maupassant is distinctively French. With all Daudet's exquisite sensibility he has not the homely sympathy of Barrie's Scotch pathos and humor in "Leeby and Jamie." National traits give the distinctive qualities that may form a supplementary study, with that of the different methods of impressionism, realism, romanticism; terms not to be defined once for all, but to be understood in their various shadings only through familiarity with the many different orders of realists, impressionists, and romanticists.

The detail of Poe or of Conan Doyle which carries conviction through its matter-of-factness is realistic; but place Poe or Conan Doyle beside Maupassant's studies in the naturalistic method and these less detailed writers seem fairly romantic. Again beside Hawthorne's romantic method of dealing with souls through symbols—sister-flowers, snow-images, stone-faces—even the romantic style of "The Merry Men" has its realism. Hawthorne then passes over into the allegorical order of writers. And one may, in this order, lose himself in parables, fairy stories, and fables of beasts.

These much-bandied terms, romantic, symbolic, realistic, impressionistic, must grow up in the student's mind and gather to themselves a connotation not to be found in any definition; and though the student will do well to consider theories as set forth by Brunétière in his "Roman Naturaliste," Zola's "Roman Experimental," or Howells's "Criticism and Fiction," and may profitably study the intimate revelations of method in Stevenson's "Letters" and Hawthorne's "American Notes," he will be slow to commit himself to a set definition of any of these overlapping terms, or to announce that he has learned the secrets of their art.

II

The first task of the short story writer is to decide what element shall be the dominating one. His choice

is wide. For not only may he choose the three fundamentals, plot with all its variations, character, setting, but he finds ready to his hand secondary elements, such as didactic purpose, the tragic and the comic. He may frankly aim to amuse; or he may write simply of simple people, whimsically of children or quaint characters, or psychologically of men and women whose mental processes are complex.

The plot story more than any other is the true type of the short story. In its perfection it will be found combining with plot both character and setting. Of such perfection Professor Perry says, "Bret Harte's 'The Luck of Roaring Camp,' Mr. Cable's 'Posson Jone,' Mr. Aldrich's 'Marjorie Daw,' Mr. Kipling's 'The Man Who Would be King,' Miss Jewett's 'The Queen's Twin,' Miss Wilkins's 'A New England Nun,' Dr. Hale's 'The Man Without a Country,' present people and events and circumstances, blended into an artistic whole, that defies analysis." Other stories combining with perfect balance these three fundamental interests will immediately come to mind, notably "La Grande Bretèche," "Without Benefit of Clergy," and illustrations included in the present volume. Perfect types exist where the balance is less equal; but it may perhaps be questioned whether these stories do not verge toward the character sketch on the one hand, or the impression on the other.

The following analysis of short story plot by no means covers the entire range of possibilities. It merely attempts to place before the student the most striking kinds in use by the best writers of short stories. Of the more narrowly defined species of plot a pronounced type is the mystery plot. Mere mystery or mystification should be carefully differentiated from pure horror. "The Purloined Letter," "The Gold Bug," and Gissing's "The House of Cobwebs" involve little beyond adroit puzzling of the reader, or pleasant mixture of suspense

with the unknown. Such a story as Balzac's "An Episode Under the Terror" or Mrs. Wharton's "Afterward" develops a greater degree of intensity, while Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" are the acme of horror. The element of horror characterizes a good many stories which may not, because of their balance of interests, be properly described as stories of horror. Instances are "The Venus of Ille," "The Merry Men," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and, at the highest point in its action, Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger."

The letter form of plot has received considerable critical abuse. Its obvious fault lies in the slowness of its action. But this may be greatly relieved by a skillful writer, and the added flexibility of point of view is advantageous. Once adopted, however, the letter form should not be abandoned throughout the story. Aldrich abandoned it in "Marjorie Daw," resorting to direct narration, and violating thereby unity of point of view.

Upon comparison of stories the device of the parenthesis is found to be very popular. When used with a feeling for artistic construction the parenthesis is complete, and the main story is incased in a scene which gives rise to the narration. To this scene the author returns after the dénouement of the main story. This parenthesis serves various purposes, such as to emphasize the horror of the main story, or to relieve a too intense strain. It serves the latter function in "La Mère Sauvage." Still further illustrations of stories preserving the complete parenthesis are "A Passion in the Desert," "The Man Without a Country," "Wakefield," "The Man Who Would be King," and "Youth," by Joseph Conrad. Sometimes the parenthesis merely takes the form of an opening paragraph, as in "La Grande Bretèche." This half-parenthetical form was employed by Hawthorne in "Rappaccini's Daughter." It will be remembered that in some editions this story purports to

be from the writings of Aubépine, and that several paragraphs are given over by the author to an editorial note descanting upon the literary qualities and biography of the imaginary Aubépine, the really delightful and subtle story being marred by the heavy half-parenthesis with which it opens.

The introduction of Aubépine as an actual figure in French literature suggests a third device—that of imposing upon the reader, as real, a character existent only in the mind of one of the characters in the story. Aldrich has made this device famous in "Marjorie Daw." His "Mlle. Olympe Zabriski" is an instance of a plot employing yet another trick. For Mlle. Zabriski, after both the reader and Van Twiller have become interested in her trapeze career, turns out to be a boy. For sheer audacity of plot no story surpasses Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger." Not only does the author leave the reader in the lurch, but he gloats over the trick he has played him. "The Lady or the Tiger," like almost everything this author ever wrote, is loosely constructed —he is said to have begun his stories with no prearranged end in mind—but it has the touch about it which defies time.

The exaggerated device story is, however, less common than the plot based upon legitimate clash of motive or passion. Of genuine plots the three-character plot is the easiest for the beginner. It fairly works itself out alone. A familiar illustration is found in "The New England Nun," where the action depends upon the relation of two women to one man. Jealousy is often a powerful adjunct to this kind of plot, and the relation may be reversed to one woman's attitude to two men. A struggle between love and filial duty may alter the choice of characters; in short, the group of three may present a variety of aspects.

When the clash passes from the three-character group to one of two there is liability that plot will become

subordinate to characterization. This happens in "The Solitary," where Stephen Forster serves chiefly as the force creating growth in Nicholas Gunn. It is *possible* to produce a true short story with one character, but such a story is a *tour de force;* while more than three characters tend to clog action and destroy unity, unless the additional characters are much subordinated, and serve chiefly to secure local color.

The one-character plot is frequently narrated in the first person. The narrator is in possession of unusual insight into the life and character of the person about whom the story is woven, and takes the public into his confidence. Dr. Hale adopted this plan in "The Man Without a Country," Hawthorne in "Wakefield," and Mr. James in "Brooksmith"—for "Brooksmith" may be placed in the list of one-character stories, since Mr. Oliver Offord flits so vaguely across the pages as hardly to leave his imprint there. On first thoughts it may seem doubtful whether the one-character story can rise to a strong climax; but "The Man Without a Country," although it does not reserve its emphasis for one great climax, presents three well-defined heights in its action —the reading by Nolan of the familiar lines, "Breathes there a man with soul so dead," Mrs. Graff's rebuke, and the incident of the slave ship. It may be noted here that the story within a story, such as we have in "The Man Without a Country," presents special difficulties to the analyst of short-story construction, since in some instances the parenthesis concerns the actors in the main story, while in others it serves only to introduce and conclude the inclosed story. A comparison of "The Man Without a Country" with "La Grande Bretéche" shows the difference readily. When the characters of the central action are carried over into the parenthesis, the climax may appear at the end of the inclosure, the dénouement running over into the parenthesis. Both "The Man Without a Country" and the "Man Who Would

be King" reveal a dénouement in the parenthesis—the deaths of Nolan and Dravot respectively. Often it is possible to analyze such parenthetical stories in more than one way. For example, in Mr. Kipling's story the climax may be either Dravot's death which occurs in Carnehan's narrative, or the exposure of Dravot's head which occurs in the last half of the parenthesis and is, actually, the highest point in the effect of horror. In the case of "Wakefield" and "Brooksmith" analysis is simple. The action in both of these rises and falls according to preconceived standards of excellence. "Brooksmith," in fact, as a model of short-story excellence, outstrips many of the same author's other stories, which more often present the *nuances* of a situation than evolve a unified plot.

The dramatic quality of the short story may well be emphasized, and the need for skillful manipulation of antecedent material and preparation for the climax. The conclusion should evolve inevitably from the beginning. Failure to effect this means failure to grasp the tools firmly, and master difficulties. "Markheim," "The Sire de Malétroit's Door," and "Without Benefit of Clergy" advance as methodically as possible toward their endings. Regarded as a perfect dramatic construction and a successful reproduction of mediæval French narration, "The Sire de Malétroit's Door" is a masterpiece. Of it Stevenson wrote to Sydney Colvin, "a true novel, in the old vein; all unities preserved moreover, if that's anything." Aiming at a balance of parts and an old-fashioned conventionality of treatment, Stevenson has succeeded here in achieving a nice progression of incident "from the swinging of the door which traps the hero," as Professor Canby points out, "to the cruel uncle who condemns, the maiden who scorns, weeps, and mates just as the night turns into dawn."

The limits of the short story exclude much development of character. Characters are, rather, caught and

displayed at the moment of change, when forces highly operative upon their natures and the current of their future lives are in action. Much may be suggested of previous state, or ultimate condition, by a few swift paragraphs, or casual hints dropped by the way. Maupassant is the best possible model for the student of this kind of condensation. "The Necklace" and "The Piece of String" are little short of miraculous in what they succeed in telling within the compass of a very few thousand words. Character contrast has also been proved to be a most useful means to secure rapid character exposition and plot movement. As in "The Solitary," contrasting characters work upon each other, revealing temperaments, and hastening the climax. Bret Harte is fond of contrasts, even contrasting his minor characters which he uses more profusely than many short-story writers—chiefly to reproduce the atmosphere of real life. When the short story grows in length, as in "Master and Man" and "The Venus of Ille," the number of characters noticeably increases; and we get a sense not only of growth and of contrasts, but of community life.

Distinction should be made between the impressionistic story, a story *employing* local color, and one *depending* upon local color. Some of Stevenson's own utterances are the best comment upon his use of setting. "Certain dank gardens cry aloud for murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable." So much for setting when it determines action. But Stevenson speaks more explicitly in regard to the use of setting as the central note: "There are, so far as I know, three ways, and three only, of writing a story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it, or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it, or lastly you may take a certain atmosphere, and get

action and persons to express and realize it. I'll give you an example—'The Merry Men.' There I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which that coast affected me." When writing in the impressionistic vein, Stevenson, the versatile, aimed at a single effect. In "The Merry Men" it is the fateful effect upon man of the sea in Sandag Bay, in "Markheim" the single effect of horror. So too with other writers; in "The Fall of the House of Usher" it is the atmosphere of decay, in "The Venus of Ille" of the havoc wrought by jealousy, in "An Episode Under the Terror" of the spirit of the French Revolution, in "The Ambitious Guest" it is the sense of approaching disaster which is left with the reader, in "They" the consciousness of the presence of the spirits of little children, and in "Wakefield" an impression of the hovering over the home of Wakefield's wife of the gentle, crafty presence of her husband.

The impressionistic use of setting demands a power to focus and subordinate all short-story elements liable in any way to blur the sought for effect. The ability to handle it is not in the least the same as the ability to make effective use of local color. Consider the growth in Kipling's work from the vivid, photographic presentation of what his senses impressed upon him in the East to what "his intuitions told him in 'They.'" Both Mr. Kipling and Stevenson infuse their local color with sense impressions. The thirst and heat described in "Kidnapped" rise to mind; and the lovely appeal of nature to the senses at the moment when night turns into day to be found in "Travels With a Donkey." The same physical appeal permeates the descriptions of "The Man Who Would be King" when they deal with newspaper office or Indian town in the hot season. Nor are the French and Russian writers to be overlooked. The opening of "The Piece of String" reeks with farm

odors, although Maupassant is, characteristically, brief in his descriptions; and it is impossible to read the descriptions of the blizzard in "Master and Man" without throwing an extra log on the fire. Vividly sensuous setting, however, seems dependent upon experience. Kipling had "put the paper to bed" on scorching nights in India, and he dipped into his memory and wrote. He recalled street scenes he knew by heart, and wrote of Dravot and Carnehan setting forth disguised as mad priests upon camels laden with mud toys; these descriptions transport us to the East as we read; they do this by virtue of being descriptions based upon the writer's actual experience. Beside them the descriptions in Carnehan's recital of the kingdom in Kafiristan are without reality. And we may hazard a guess that the latter place was to Mr. Kipling merely an area upon a map.

The local colorists form a separate school, and have served a definite purpose. To their exploitation of the remote corners of the world the reading public is indebted for much heterogeneous information, and a far better understanding of the peoples of the earth. Their offense against art is the overloading of their stories with that short-story element which, of all three main elements, is the least important.

MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SHORT PROSE FICTION

A LIVING RELIC[1]

By IVAN TURGENEV (1818–1883)

(From "A Sportsman's Sketches," 1852)

He was born essentially impersonal.—RENAN.

"One by one, for thirty years, with a firm, deliberate hand, with intervals of patience and waits, Turgenev pricked in his sharp outlines. His great external mark is probably his concision: an ideal he never threw over—it shines most perhaps when he is least brief—and that he often applied with a rare simplicity. He has masterpieces of a few pages: his perfect things are sometimes his least prolonged. He abounds in short tales, episodes, clipped as if by the scissors of Atropos."—HENRY JAMES.

O native land of long-suffering,
Land of the Russian people.

F. TYUTCHEV.

A FRENCH proverb says that "a dry fisherman and a wet hunter are a sorry sight." Never having had any taste for fishing, I cannot decide what are the fisherman's feelings in fine bright weather, and how far in bad weather the pleasure

[1] Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, The Macmillan Company.

derived from the abundance of fish compensates for the unpleasantness of being wet. But for the sportsman rain is a real calamity. It was to just this calamity that Yermolaï and I were exposed on one of our expeditions after grouse in the Byelevsky district. The rain never ceased from early morning. What didn't we do to escape it? We put mackintosh capes almost right over our heads, and stood under the trees to avoid the raindrops. . . . The waterproof capes, to say nothing of their hindering our shooting, let the water through in the most shameless fashion; and under the trees, though at first, certainly, the rain did not reach us, afterwards the water collected on the leaves suddenly rushed through, every branch dripped on us like a waterspout, a chill stream made its way under our neckties, and trickled down our spines. . . . This was "quite unpleasant," as Yermolaï expressed it. "No, Piotr Petrovitch," he cried at last; "we can't go on like this. . . . There's no shooting to-day. The dogs' scent is drowned. The guns miss fire. . . . Pugh! What a mess!"

"What's to be done?" I queried.

"Well, let's go to Aleksyevka. You don't know it, perhaps—there's a settlement of that name belonging to your mother; it's seven miles from here. We'll stay the night there, and to-morrow. . . ."

"Come back here?"

"No, not here. . . . I know of some places beyond Aleksyevka . . . ever so much better than here for grouse!"

I did not proceed to question my faithful companion why he had not taken me to those parts before, and the same day we made our way to my mother's peasant settlement, the existence of which, I must confess, I had not even suspected up till then. At this settlement, it turned out, there was a little lodge. It was very old, but, as it had not been inhabited, it was clean; I passed a fairly tranquil night in it.

The next day I woke up very early. The sun had only just risen; there was not a single cloud in the sky; everything around shone with a double brilliance—the brightness of the fresh morning rays and of yesterday's downpour. While they were harnessing me a cart, I went for a stroll about a small orchard, now neglected and run wild, which inclosed the little lodge on all sides with its fragrant, sappy

growth. Ah, how sweet it was in the open air, under the bright sky, where the larks were trilling, whence their bell-like notes rained down like silvery beads! On their wings, doubtless, they had carried off drops of dew, and their songs seemed steeped in dew. I took my cap off my head and drew a glad deep breath. . . . On the slope of a shallow ravine, close to the hedge, could be seen a beehive; a narrow path led to it, winding like a snake between dense walls of high grass and nettles, above which struggled up, God knows whence brought, the pointed stalks of dark-green hemp.

I turned along this path; I reached the beehive. Beside it stood a little wattled shanty, where they put the beehives for the winter. I peeped into the half-open door; it was dark, still, dry within; there was a scent of mint and balm. In the corner were some trestles fitted together, and on them, covered with a quilt, a little figure of some sort. . . . I was walking away. . . .

"Master, master! Piotr Petrovitch!" I heard a voice, faint, slow, and hoarse, like the whispering of marsh rushes.

I stopped.

"Piotr Petrovitch! Come in, please!" the voice repeated. It came from the corner where were the trestles I had noticed.

I drew near, and was struck dumb with amazement. Before me lay a living human being; but what sort of a creature was it?

A head utterly withered, of a uniform coppery hue—like some very ancient holy picture, yellow with age; a sharp nose like a keen-edged knife; the lips could barely be seen—only the teeth flashed white and the eyes; and from under the kerchief some thin wisps of yellow hair straggled on to the forehead. At the chin, where the quilt was folded, two tiny hands of the same coppery hue were moving, the fingers slowly twitching like little sticks. I looked more intently; the face, far from being ugly, was positively beautiful, but strange and dreadful; and the face seemed the more dreadful to me that on it—on its metallic cheeks—I saw, struggling . . . struggling, and unable to form itself—a smile.

"You don't recognize me, master?" whispered the voice again: it seemed to be breathed from the almost unmoving

lips. "And, indeed, how should you? I'm Lukerya. . . . Do you remember, who used to lead the dance at your mother's, at Spasskoye? . . . Do you remember, I used to be leader of the choir, too?"

"Lukerya!" I cried. "Is it you? Can it be?"

"Yes, it's I, master—I, Lukerya."

I did not know what to say, and gazed in stupefaction at the dark motionless face with the clear, deathlike eyes fastened upon me. Was it possible? This mummy Lukerya—the greatest beauty in all our household—that tall, plump, pink-and-white, singing, laughing, dancing creature! Lukerya, our smart Lukerya, whom all our lads were courting, for whom I heaved some secret sighs—I, a boy of sixteen!

"Mercy, Lukerya!" I said at last; "what is it has happened to you?"

"Oh, such a misfortune befell me! But don't mind me, sir; don't let my trouble revolt you; sit there on that little tub—a little nearer, or you won't be able to hear me. . . . I've not much of a voice nowadays! . . . Well, I am glad to see you! What brought you to Aleksyevka?"

Lukerya spoke very softly and feebly, but without pausing.

"Yermolaï, the huntsman, brought me here. But you tell me . . ."

"Tell you about my trouble? Certainly, sir. It happened to me a long while ago now—six or seven years. I had only just been betrothed then to Vassily Polyakov—do you remember, such a fine-looking fellow he was, with curly hair?—he waited at table at your mother's. But you weren't in the country then; you had gone away to Moscow to your studies. We were very much in love, Vassily and me; I could never get him out of my head; and it was in the spring it all happened. Well, one night . . . not long before sunrise, it was . . . I couldn't sleep; a nightingale in the garden was singing so wonderfully sweet! . . . I could not help getting up and going out on to the steps to listen. It trilled and trilled . . . and all at once I fancied some one called me; it seemed like Vassya's voice, so softly, 'Lusha!' . . . I looked round, and being half asleep, I suppose, I missed my footing and fell straight down from the top-step, and flop on to the ground! And I thought I wasn't much

hurt, for I got up directly and went back to my room. Only it seems something inside me—in my body—was broken. . . . Let me get my breath . . . half a minute . . . sir."

Lukerya ceased, and I looked at her with surprise. What surprised me particularly was that she told her story almost cheerfully, without sighs and groans, not complaining nor asking for sympathy.

"Ever since that happened," Lukerya went on, "I began to pine away and get thin; my skin got dark; walking was difficult with me; and then—I lost the use of my legs altogether; I couldn't stand or sit; I had to lie down all the time. And I didn't care to eat or drink; I got worse and worse. Your mamma, in the kindness of her heart, made me see doctors, and sent me to a hospital. But there was no curing me. And not one doctor could even say what my illness was. What didn't they do to me?—they burned my spine with hot irons, they put me in lumps of ice, and it was all no good. I got quite numb in the end. . . . So the gentlemen decided it was no use doctoring me any more, and there was no sense in keeping cripples up at the great house . . . well, and so they sent me here—because I've relations here. So here I live, as you see."

Lukerya was silent again, and again she tried to smile.

"But this is awful—your position!" I cried . . . and not knowing how to go on, I asked: "and what of Vassily Polyakov?" A most stupid question it was.

Lukerya turned her eyes a little away.

"What of Polyakov? He grieved—he grieved for a bit—and he is married to another, a girl from Glinnoe. Do you know Glinnoe? It's not far from us. Her name's Agrafena. He loved me dearly—but, you see, he's a young man! he couldn't stay a bachelor. And what sort of a helpmeet could I be? The wife he found for himself is a good, sweet woman—and they have children. He lives here; he's a clerk at a neighbor's; your mamma let him go off with a passport, and he's doing very well, praise God."

"And so you go on lying here all the time?" I asked again.

"Yes, sir, I've been lying here seven years. In the summer time I lie here in this shanty, and when it gets cold they move me out into the bath house: I lie there."

"Who waits on you? Does anyone look after you?"

"Oh, there are kind folks here as everywhere; they don't desert me. Yes, they see to me a little. As to food, I eat nothing to speak of; but water is here, in the pitcher; it's always kept full of pure spring water. I can reach to the pitcher myself: I've one arm still of use. There's a little girl here, an orphan; now and then she comes to see me, the kind child. She was here just now. . . . You didn't meet her? Such a pretty, fair little thing. She brings me flowers. We've some in the garden—there were some—but they've all disappeared. But, you know, wild flowers, too, are nice; they smell even sweeter than garden flowers. Lilies of the valley, now . . . what could be sweeter?"

"And aren't you dull and miserable, my poor Lukerya?"

"Why, what is one to do? I wouldn't tell a lie about it. At first it was very wearisome; but later on I got used to it, I got more patient—it was nothing; there are others worse off still."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, some haven't a roof to shelter them, and there are some blind or deaf; while I, thank God, have splendid sight, and hear everything—everything. If a mole burrows in the ground—I hear even that. And I can smell every scent, even the faintest! When the buckwheat comes into flower in the meadow, or the lime-tree in the garden—I don't need to be told of it, even; I'm the first to know directly. Anyway, if there's the least bit of a wind blowing from that quarter. No, he who stirs God's wrath is far worse off than me. Look at this, again: anyone in health may easily fall into sin; but I'm cut off even from sin. The other day, Father Aleksy, the priest, came to give me the sacrament, and he says: 'There's no need,' says he, 'to confess you; you can't fall into sin in your condition, can you?' But I said to him: 'How about sinning in thought, father?' 'Ah, well,' says he, and he laughed himself, 'that's no great sin.'

"But I fancy I'm no great sinner even in that way, in thought," Lukerya went on, "for I've trained myself not to think, and above all, not to remember. The time goes faster."

I must own I was astonished. "You're always alone,

Lukerya: how can you prevent the thoughts from coming into your head? or are you constantly asleep?"

"Oh, no, sir! I can't always sleep. Though I've no great pain, still I've an ache, there, right inside, and in my bones too; it won't let me sleep as I ought. No . . . but there, I lie by myself; I lie here and lie here, and don't think: I feel that I'm alive, I breathe; and I put myself all into that. I look and listen. The bees buzz and hum in the hive; a dove sits on the roof and coos; a hen comes along with her chickens to peck up crumbs; or a sparrow flies in, or a butterfly—that's a great treat for me. Last year some swallows even built a nest over there in the corner, and brought up their little ones. Oh, how interesting it was! One would fly to the nest, press close, feed a young one, and off again. Look again: the other would be in her place already. Sometimes it wouldn't fly in, but only fly past the open door; and the little ones would begin to squeak, and open their beaks directly. . . . I was hoping for them back again the next year, but they say a sportsman here shot them with his gun. And what could he gain by it? It's hardly bigger, the swallow, than a beetle. . . . What wicked men you are, you sportsmen!"

"I don't shoot swallows," I hastened to remark.

"And once," Lukerya began again, "it was comical, really. A hare ran in, it did really! The hounds, I suppose, were after it; anyway, it seemed to tumble straight in at the door! . . . It squatted quite near me, and sat so a long while; it kept sniffing with its nose, and twitching its whiskers—like a regular officer! and it looked at me. It understood, to be sure, that I was no danger to it. At last it got up, went hop-hop to the door, looked round in the doorway; and what did it look like? Such a funny fellow it was!"

Lukerya glanced at me, as much as to say, "Wasn't it funny?" To satisfy her, I laughed. She moistened her parched lips.

"Well, in the winter, of course, I'm worse off, because it's dark: to burn a candle would be a pity, and what would be the use? I can read, to be sure, and was always fond of reading, but what could I read? There are no books of any kind, and even if there were, how could I hold a book?

Father Aleksy brought me a calendar to entertain me, but he saw it was no good, so he took and carried it away again. But even though it's dark, there's always something to listen to: a cricket chirps, or a mouse begins scratching somewhere. That's when it's a good thing—not to think!

"And I repeat the prayers, too," Lukerya went on, after taking breath a little; "only I don't know many of them—the prayers, I mean. And besides, why should I weary the Lord God? What can I ask Him for? He knows better than I what I need. He has laid a cross upon me: that means that He loves me. So we are commanded to understand. I repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Hymn to the Virgin, the Supplication of all the Afflicted, and I lie still again, without any thought at all, and am all right!"

Two minutes passed by. I did not break the silence, and did not stir on the narrow tub which served me as a seat. The cruel stony stillness of the living, unlucky creature lying before me communicated itself to me; I, too, turned, as it were, numb.

"Listen, Lukerya," I began at last; "listen to the suggestion I'm going to make to you. Would you like me to arrange for them to take you to a hospital—a good hospital in the town? Who knows, perhaps you might yet be cured; anyway, you would not be alone. . . ."

Lukerya's eyebrows fluttered faintly. "Oh, no, sir," she answered in a troubled whisper; "don't move me into a hospital; don't touch me. I shall only have more agony to bear there! How could they cure me now? . . . Why, there was a doctor came here once; he wanted to examine me. I begged him, for Christ's sake, not to disturb me. It was no use. He began turning me over, pounding my hands and legs, and pulling me about. He said, 'I'm doing this for Science; I'm a servant of Science—a scientific man! And you,' he said, 'really oughtn't to oppose me, because I've a medal given me for my labors, and it's for you simpletons I'm toiling.' He mauled me about, told me the name of my disease—some wonderful long name—and with that he went away; and all my poor bones ached for a week after. You say 'I'm all alone; always alone.' Oh, no, I'm not always; they come to see me—I'm quiet—I don't bother them. The peasant girls come in and chat a bit; a pilgrim woman will

wander in, and tell me tales of Jerusalem, of Kiev, of the holy towns. And I'm not afraid of being alone. Indeed, it's better—aye, aye! Master, don't touch me, don't take me to the hospital. . . . Thank you, you are kind; only don't touch me, there's a dear!"

"Well, as you like, as you like, Lukerya. You know, I only suggested it for your good."

"I know, master, that it was for my good. But, master dear, who can help another? Who can enter into his soul? Every man must help himself! You won't believe me, perhaps. I lie here sometimes so alone . . . and it's as though there were no one else in the world but me. As if I alone were living! And it seems to me as though something were blessing me. . . . I'm carried away by dreams that are really marvelous!"

"What do you dream of, then, Lukerya?"

"That, too, master, I couldn't say; one can't explain. Besides, one forgets afterwards. It's like a cloud coming over and bursting, then it grows so fresh and sweet; but just what it was, there's no knowing! Only my idea is, if folks were near me, I should have nothing of that, and should feel nothing except my misfortune."

Lukerya heaved a painful sigh. Her breathing, like her limbs, was not under her control.

"When I come to think, master, of you," she began again, "you are very sorry for me. But you mustn't be too sorry, really! I'll tell you one thing; for instance, I sometimes, even now. . . . Do you remember how merry I used to be in my time? A regular madcap! . . . So do you know what? I sing songs even now."

"Sing? . . . You?"

"Yes; I sing the old songs, songs for choruses, for feasts, Christmas songs, all sorts! I know such a lot of them, you see, and I've not forgotten them. Only dance songs I don't sing. In my state now, it wouldn't suit me."

"How do you sing them? . . . to yourself?"

"To myself, yes; and aloud, too. I can't sing loud, but still one can understand it. I told you a little girl waits on me. A clever little orphan she is. So I have taught her; four songs she has learned from me already. Don't you believe me? Wait a minute, I'll show you directly. . . ."

Lukerya took breath. . . . The thought that this half-dead creature was making ready to begin singing raised an involuntary feeling of dread in me. But before I could utter a word, a long-drawn-out, hardly audible, but pure and true note, was quivering in my ears. . . . it was followed by a second and a third. "In the meadows," sang Lukerya. She sang, the expression of her stony face unchanged, even her eyes riveted on one spot. But how touchingly tinkled out that poor struggling little voice, that wavered like a thread of smoke: how she longed to pour out all her soul in it! . . . I felt no dread now; my heart throbbed with unutterable pity.

"Ah, I can't!" she said suddenly. "I've not the strength. I'm so upset with joy at seeing you."

She closed her eyes.

I laid my hand on her tiny, chill fingers. . . . She glanced at me, and her dark lids, fringed with golden eyelashes, closed again, and were still as an ancient statue's. An instant later they glistened in the half-darkness. . . . They were moistened by a tear.

As before, I did not stir.

"How silly I am!" said Lukerya suddenly, with unexpected force, and opened her eyes wide: she tried to wink the tears out of them. "I ought to be ashamed! What am I doing? It's a long time since I have been like this . . . not since that day when Vassya-Polyakov was here last spring. While he sat with me and talked, I was all right; but when he had gone away, how I did cry in my loneliness! Where did I get the tears from? But, there! we girls get our tears for nothing. Master," added Lukerya, "perhaps you have a handkerchief. . . . If you won't mind, wipe my eyes."

I made haste to carry out her desire, and left her the handkerchief. She refused it at first. . . . "What good's such a gift to me?" she said. The handkerchief was plain enough, but clean and white. Afterwards she clutched it in her weak fingers, and did not loosen them again. As I got used to the darkness in which we both were, I could clearly make out her features, could even perceive the delicate flush that peeped out under the coppery hue of her face, could discover in the face, so at least it seemed to me, traces of its former beauty.

"You asked me, master," Lukerya began again, "whether I sleep. I sleep very little, but every time I fall asleep I've dreams—such splendid dreams! I'm never ill in my dreams; I'm always so well, and young. . . . There's one thing's sad: I wake up and long for a good stretch, and I'm all as if I were in chains. I once had such an exquisite dream! Shall I tell it you? Well, listen. I dreamed I was standing in a meadow, and all round me was rye, so tall, and ripe as gold! . . . and I had a reddish dog with me—such a wicked dog; it kept trying to bite me. And I had a sickle in my hands; not a simple sickle; it seemed to be the moon itself—the moon as it is when it's the shape of a sickle. And with this same moon I had to cut the rye clean. Only I was very weary with the heat, and the moon blinded me, and I felt lazy; and cornflowers were growing all about, and such big ones! And they all turned their heads to me. And I thought in my dream I would pick them; Vassya had promised to come, so I'd pick myself a wreath first; I'd still time to plait it. I began picking cornflowers, but they kept melting away from between my fingers, do what I would. And I couldn't make myself a wreath. And meanwhile I heard some one coming up to me, so close, and calling, 'Lush! Lusha!' . . . 'Ah,' I thought, 'what a pity I hadn't time!' No matter, I put that moon on my head instead of cornflowers. I put it on like a tiara, and I was all brightness directly; I made the whole field light around me. And, behold! over the very top of the ears there came gliding very quickly toward me, not Vassya, but Christ Himself! And how I knew it was Christ I can't say; they don't paint Him like that—only it was He! No beard, tall, young, all in white, only His belt was golden; and He held out His hand to me. 'Fear not,' said He; 'My bride adorned, follow Me; you shall lead the choral dance in the heavenly kingdom, and sing the songs of Paradise.' And how I clung to His hand! My dog at once followed at my heels . . . but then we began to float upward! He in front. . . . His wings spread wide over all the sky, long like a sea-gull's—and I after Him! And my dog had to stay behind. Then only I understood that that dog was my illness, and that in the heavenly kingdom there was no place for it."

Lukerya paused a minute.

"And I had another dream, too," she began again; "but may be it was a vision. I really don't know. It seemed to me I was lying in this very shanty, and my dead parents, father and mother, come to me and bow low to me, but say nothing. And I asked them, 'Why do you bow down to me, father and mother?' 'Because,' they said, 'you suffer much in this world, so that you have not only set free your own soul, but have taken a great burden from off us, too. And for us in the other world it is much easier. You have made an end of your own sins; now you are expiating our sins.' And having said this, my parents bowed down to me again, and I could not see them; there was nothing but the walls to be seen. I was in great doubt afterwards what had happened with me. I even told the priest of it in confession. Only he thinks it was not a vision, because visions come only to the clerical gentry."

"And I'll tell you another dream," Lukerya went on. "I dreamed I was sitting on the high-road, under a willow; I had a stick, had a wallet on my shoulders, and my head tied up in a kerchief, just like a pilgrim woman! And I had to go somewhere, a long, long way off, on a pilgrimage. And pilgrims kept coming past me; they came along slowly, all going one way; their faces were weary, and all very much like one another. And I dreamed that moving about among them was a woman, a head taller than the rest, and wearing a peculiar dress, not like ours—not Russian. And her face, too, was peculiar—a worn face and severe. And all the others moved away from her; but she suddenly turns, and comes straight to me. She stood still, and looked at me; and her eyes were yellow, large, and clear as a falcon's. And I ask her, 'Who are you?' And she says to me, 'I'm your death.' Instead of being frightened, it was quite the other way. I was as pleased as could be; I crossed myself! And the woman, my death, says to me: 'I'm sorry for you, Lukerya, but I can't take you with me. Farewell!' Good God! how sad I was then! . . . 'Take me,' said I, 'good mother, take me, darling!' And my death turned to me, and began speaking to me. . . . I knew that she was appointing me my hour, but indistinctly, incomprehensibly. 'After St. Peter's day,' said she. . . . With that I awoke. . . . Yes, I have such wonderful dreams!"

Lukerya turned her eyes upward . . . and sank into thought. . . .

"Only the sad thing is, sometimes a whole week will go by without my getting to sleep once. Last year a lady came to see me, and she gave me a little bottle of medicine against sleeplessness; she told me to take ten drops at a time. It did me so much good, and I used to sleep; only the bottle was all finished long ago. Do you know what medicine that was, and how to get it?"

The lady had obviously given Lukerya opium. I promised to get her another bottle like it, and could not refrain from again wondering aloud at her patience.

"Ah, master!" she answered, "why do you say so? What do you mean by patience? There, Simeon Stylites now had patience certainly, great patience; for thirty years he stood on a pillar! And another saint had himself buried in the earth, right up to his breast, and the ants ate his face. . . . And I'll tell you what I was told by a good scholar: there was once a country, and the Ishmaelites made war on it, and they tortured and killed all the inhabitants; and do what they would, the people could not get rid of them. And there appeared among these people a holy virgin; she took a great sword, put on armor weighing eighty pounds, went out against the Ishmaelites and drove them all beyond the sea. Only when she had driven them out, she said to them: 'Now burn me, for that was my vow, that I would die a death by fire for my people.' And the Ishmaelites took her and burned her, and the people have been free ever since then! That was a noble deed, now! But what am I!"

I wondered to myself whence and in what shape the legend of Joan of Arc had reached her, and after a brief silence, I asked Lukerya how old she was.

"Twenty-eight . . . or nine. . . . It won't be thirty. But why count the years! I've something else to tell you. . . ."

Lukerya suddenly gave a sort of choked cough, and groaned. . . .

"You are talking a great deal," I observed to her; "it may be bad for you."

"It's true," she whispered, hardly audibly; "it's time to end our talk; but what does it matter! Now, when you

leave me, I can be silent as long as I like. Anyway, I've opened my heart. . . .

I began bidding her good-by. I repeated my promise to send her the medicine, and asked her once more to think well and tell me—if there wasn't anything she wanted?

"I want nothing; I am content with all, thank God!" she articulated with very great effort, but with emotion; "God give good health to all! But there, master, you might speak a word to your mamma—the peasants here are poor—if she could take the least bit off their rent! They've not land enough, and no advantages. . . . They would pray to God for you. . . . But I want nothing; I'm quite contented with all."

I gave Lukerya my word that I would carry out her request, and had already walked to the door. . . . She called me back again.

"Do you remember, master," she said, and there was a gleam of something wonderful in her eyes and on her lips, "what hair I used to have? Do you remember, right down to my knees! It was long before I could make up my mind to it. . . . Such hair as it was! But how could it be kept combed? In my state! . . . So I had it cut off. . . . Yes. . . . Well, good-by, master! I can't talk any more. . . ."

That day, before setting off to shoot, I had a conversation with the village constable about Lukerya. I learned from him that in the village they called Lukerya the "Living Relic"; that she gave them no trouble, however; they never heard complaint or repining from her. "She asks nothing, but, on the contrary, she's grateful for everything; a gentle soul, one must say, if any there be. Stricken of God," so the constable concluded, "for her sins, one must suppose; but we do not go into that. And as for judging her, no—no, we do not judge her. Let her be!"

. . . . . .

A few weeks later I heard that Lukerya was dead. So her death had come for her . . . and "after St. Peter's day." They told me that on the day of her death she kept hearing the sound of bells, though it was reckoned over five miles from Aleksyevka to the church, and it was a week-day. Lukerya, however, had said that the sounds came not from the church, but from above! Probably she did not dare to say—from heaven.

THE DEATH OF THE DAUPHIN[1]

By ALPHONSE DAUDET (1840–1897)

(From "Letters from My Mill," 1869)

Daudet's method was that of the notebook in which one sets down every little detail that may give the picture reality. It is a method which demands the "seeing eye" of genius.

This little story well illustrates the point which Zola makes in his lament over Daudet dead: "Benevolent nature has placed him at that exquisite point where poetry ends and reality begins."

The little Dauphin is sick; the little Dauphin is going to die. In all the churches of the realm the Blessed Sacrament is exposed night and day, and tall candles are burning for the recovery of the royal child. The streets in the old residence are sad and silent, the bells no longer ring, the carriages go at a foot-pace. About the palace the curious citizens watch through the iron grills the porters with gilt paunches talking in the courtyards with an air of importance.

The whole château is in commotion. Chamberlains, majordomos, run hastily up and down the marble staircases. The galleries are full of pages and of courtiers in silk garments, who go from group to group asking news in undertones. On the broad steps weeping maids of honor greet one another with low courtesies, wiping their eyes with pretty embroidered handkerchiefs.

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[1] Reprinted from "Little French Masterpieces," by permission of the publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

In the orangery there is a great assemblage of long-robed doctors. Through the windows they can be seen flourishing their long black sleeves and bending majestically their hammerlike wigs. The little Dauphin's governor and equerry walk back and forth before the door, awaiting the decision of the faculty. Scullions pass them by without saluting them. The equerry swears like a heathen, the governor recites lines from Horace. And meanwhile, in the direction of the stables one hears a long, plaintive neigh. It is the little Dauphin's horse, calling sadly from his empty manger.

And the king? Where is monseigneur the king? The king is all alone in a room at the end of the château. Majesties do not like to be seen weeping. As for the queen, that is a different matter. Seated at the little Dauphin's pillow, her lovely face is bathed in tears, and she sobs aloud before them all, as a linen-draper's wife might do.

In his lace-bedecked crib the little Dauphin, whiter than the cushions upon which he lies, is resting now with closed eyes. They think that he sleeps; but no. The little Dauphin is not asleep. He turns to his mother, and seeing that she is weeping, he says to her:

"Madame queen, why do you weep? Is it because you really believe I am going to die?"

The queen tries to reply. Sobs prevent her from speaking.

"Pray do not weep, madame queen; you forget that I am the Dauphin, and that dauphins cannot die like this."

The queen sobs more bitterly than ever, and the little Dauphin begins to be alarmed.

"I say," he says, "I don't want Death to come and take me, and I will find a way to prevent his coming here. Let them send at once forty very strong troopers to stand guard around our bed! Let a hundred big guns watch night and day, with matches lighted, under our windows! And woe to Death if it dares approach us!"

To please the royal child the queen makes a sign. In a moment they hear the big guns rumbling through the courtyard; and forty tall troopers, halberds in hand, take their places about the room. They are all old soldiers with gray mustaches. The little Dauphin claps his hands when he sees them. He recognizes one of them and calls him:

"Lorrain! Lorrain!"

The soldier steps forward toward the bed.

"I love you dearly, my old Lorrain. Let me see your big sword. If Death tries to take me you must kill him, won't you?"

"Yes, monseigneur," Lorrain replies. And two great tears roll down his bronzed cheeks.

At that moment the chaplain approaches the little Dauphin and talks with him for a long time in a low voice, showing him a crucifix. The little Dauphin listens with an expression of great surprise, then, abruptly interrupting him, he says:

"I understand what you say, monsieur l'abbé; but tell me, couldn't my little friend Beppo die in my place, if I gave him a lot of money?"

The chaplain continues to speak in a low voice, and the little Dauphin's expression becomes more and more astonished.

When the chaplain has finished, the little Dauphin replies with a deep sigh:

"All this that you tell me is very sad, monsieur l'abbé; but one thing consoles me, and that is that up yonder, in the paradise of the stars, I shall still be the Dauphin. I know that the good Lord is my cousin, and that He cannot fail to treat me according to my rank."

Then he adds, turning to his mother:

"Let them bring me my richest clothes, my doublet of white ermine and my velvet slippers! I wish to make myself handsome for the angels, and to enter paradise in the costume of a Dauphin."

A third time, the chaplain leans toward the little Dauphin and talks to him for a long time in a low voice. In the midst of his harangue, the royal child angrily interrupts:

"Why then, to be Dauphin is to be nothing at all!"

And, refusing to listen to anything more, the little Dauphin turns toward the wall and weeps bitterly.

LEEBY AND JAMIE[1]

By JAMES M. BARRIE (1860–)

(From "A Window in Thrums," 1889)

In "Margaret Ogilvie," that record of his mother, wherein Mr. Barrie tells us most of himself, we learn that he made up his mind to be an author before he was twelve. "From the day on which I first tasted blood in the garret my mind was made up; there could be no hum-dreadful-drum profession for me; literature was my game. It was not highly thought of by those who wished me well. I remember being asked by two maiden ladies, about the time I left the university, what I was to be, and when I replied brazenly, 'An author,' they flung up their hands, and one exclaimed reproachfully, 'And you an M.A.!'"

The purity of Mr. Barrie's art lies in the inspiration that came from his mother and the home atmosphere. Together they laughed over the fact that she was the only woman he knew and that it is always the mother who is the heroine in his books; Jess, Margaret, even Leeby. In Leeby there is too the sketch of Barrie's own sister who gave her untiring service and would rather stay with her mother than go with the man who wooed her. In his introduction to "A Window in Thrums" Barrie writes: "As it is the love of mother and son that has written everything of mine that is of any worth, it was natural that the awful horror of the untrue son

[1] From "A Window in Thrums." Copyright, 1896, 1897, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

should dog my thoughts and call upon me to paint the picture."

As to his method of work: "It was written once only," he writes, "nearly every chapter, I think, at a sitting," in contradiction of a report that his method was so painstaking that he rewrote everything eight times.

By the bank of the Quharity on a summer day I have seen a barefooted girl gaze at the running water until tears filled her eyes. That was the birth of romance. Whether this love be but a beautiful dream I cannot say, but this we see, that it comes to all, and colors the whole future life with gold. Leeby must have dreamed it, but I did not know her then. I have heard of a man who would have taken her far away into a country where the corn is yellow when it is still green with us, but she would not leave her mother, nor was it him she saw in her dream. From her earliest days, when she was still a child staggering round the garden with Jamie in her arms, her duty lay before her, straight as the burying-ground road. Jess had need of her in the little home at the top of the brae, where God, looking down upon her as she scrubbed and gossiped and sat up all night with her ailing mother, and never missed the prayer-meeting, and adored the minister, did not perhaps think her the least of His handmaids. Her years were less than thirty when He took her away, but she had few days that were altogether dark. Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.

The love Leeby bore for Jamie was such that in their younger days it shamed him. Other laddies knew of it, and flung it at him until he dared Leeby to let on in public that he and she were related.

"Hoo is your lass?" they used to cry to him, inventing a new game.

"I saw Leeby lookin' for ye," they would say; "she's wearyin' for ye to gang an' play wi' her."

Then if they were not much bigger boys than himself, Jamie got them against the dyke and hit them hard until

they publicly owned to knowing that she was his sister, and that he was not fond of her.

"It distressed him mair than ye could believe, though," Jess has told me; "an' when he came hame he would greet an' say 'at Leeby disgraced him."

Leeby, of course, suffered for her too obvious affection.

"I wonder 'at ye dinna try to control yersel'," Jamie would say to her, as he grew bigger.

"'Am sure," said Leeby, "I never gie ye a look if there's onybody there."

"A look! You're aye lookin' at me sae fondlike 'at I dinna ken what wy to turn."

"Weel, I canna help it," said Leeby, probably beginning to whimper.

If Jamie was in a very bad temper he left her, after this, to her own reflections; but he was naturally soft-hearted.

"'Am no tellin' ye no to care for me," he told her, "but juist to keep it mair to yersel'. Naebody would ken frae me 'at 'am fond o' ye."

"Mebbe yer no?" said Leeby.

"Aye, am I, but I can keep it secret. When we're in the hoose 'am juist richt fond o' ye."

"Do ye love me, Jamie?"

Jamie waggled his head in irritation.

"Love," he said, "is an awfu'-like word to use when fowk's weel. Ye shouldna spier sic annoyin' questions."

"But if ye juist say ye love me I'll never let on again afore fowk 'at yer onything to me ava."

"Aye, ye often say that."

"Do ye no believe my word?"

"I believe fine ye mean what ye say, but ye forget yersel' when the time comes."

"Juist try me this time."

"Weel, then, I do."

"Do what?" asked the greedy Leeby.

"What ye said."

"I said love."

"Weel," said Jamie, "I do't."

"What do ye do? Say the word."

"Na," said Jamie, "I winna say the word. It's no a word to say, but I do't."

That was all she could get out of him, unless he was stricken with remorse, when he even went the length of saying the word.

"Leeby kent perfectly weel," Jess has said, "'at it was a trial to Jamie to tak her ony gait, an' I often used to say to her 'at I wonder at her want o' pride in priggin' wi' him. Aye, but if she could juist get a promise wrung oot o' him, she didna care hoo muckle she had to prig. Syne they quarreled, an' ane or baith o' them grat (cried) afore they made it up. I mind when Jamie went to the fishin' Leeby was aye terrible keen to get wi' him, but ye see he couldna be seen gaen through the toon wi' her. 'If ye let me gang,' she said to him, 'I'll no seek to go through the toon wi' ye. Na, I'll gang roond by the roods an' you can tak the buryin'-ground road, so as we can meet on the hill.' Yes, Leeby was willin' to agree wi' a' that, juist to get gaen wi' him. I've seen lassies makkin' themsel's sma' for lads often enough, but I never saw ane 'at prigged so muckle wi' her ain brother. Na, it's other lassies' brothers they like as a rule."

"But though Jamie was terrible reserved aboot it," said Leeby, "he was as fond o' me as ever I was o' him. Ye mind the time I had the measles, mother?"

"'Am no likely to forget it, Leeby," said Jess, "an' you blind wi' them for three days. Aye, aye, Jamie was richt ta'en up aboot ye. I mind he broke open his pirly (money-box), an' bocht a ha'penny worth o' something to ye every day."

"An' ye hinna forgotten the stick?"

"'Deed no, I hinna. Ye see," Jess explained to me, "Leeby was lyin' ben the hoose, an' Jamie wasna allowed to gang near her for fear o' infection. Weel, he got a lang stick—it was a pea-stick—an' put it aneath the door an' waggled it. Aye, he did that a curran times every day, juist to let her see he was thinkin' o' her."

"Mair than that," said Leeby, "he cried oot 'at he loved me."

"Aye, but juist aince," Jess said. "I dinna mind o't but aince. It was the time the doctor came late, an' Jamie, being waukened by him, thocht ye was deein'. I mind as if it was yesterday hoo he cam' runnin' to the door an' cried

oot, 'I doo love ye, Leeby; I love ye richt.' The doctor got a start when he heard the voice, but he laughed loud when he un'er stood.

"He had nae business, though," said Leeby, "to tell onybody."

"He was a rale clever man, the doctor," Jess explained to me, "aye, he kent me as weel as though he'd gaen through me wi' a lichted candle. It got oot through him, an' the young billies took to sayin' to Jamie, 'Ye do love her, Jamie; aye, ye love her richt.' The only reg'lar fecht I ever kent Jamie hae was wi' a lad 'at cried that to him. It was Bowlegs Chirsty's laddie. Aye, but when she got better Jamie blamed Leeby."

"He no only blame me," said Leeby, "but he wanted me to pay him back a' the bawbees he had spent on me."

"Aye, an' I sepad he got them too," said Jess.

In time Jamie became a barber in Tilliedrum, trudging many heavy miles there and back twice a day that he might sleep at home, trudging bravely I was to say, but it was what he was born to, and there was hardly an alternative. This was the time I saw most of him, and he and Leeby were often in my thoughts. There is as terrible a bubble in the little kettle as on the caldron of the world, and some of the scenes between Jamie and Leeby were great tragedies, comedies, what you will, until the kettle was taken off the fire. Hers was the more placid temper; indeed, only in one way could Jamie suddenly rouse her to fury. That was when he hinted that she had a large number of frocks. Leeby knew that there could never be more than a Sabbath frock and an every-day gown for her, both of her mother's making, but Jamie's insinuations were more than she could bear. Then I have seen her seize and shake him. I know from Jess that Leeby cried herself hoarse the day Joey was buried, because her little black frock was not ready for wear.

Until he went to Tilliedrum, Jamie had been more a stay-at-home boy than most. The warmth of Jess's love had something to do with keeping his heart aglow, but more, I think, he owed to Leeby. Tilliedrum was his introduction to the world, and for a little it took his head. I was in the house the Sabbath day that he refused to go to church.

He went out in the forenoon to meet the Tilliedrum lads,

who were to take him off for a holiday in a cart. Hendry was more wrathful than I remember ever to have seen him, though I have heard how he did with the lodger who broke the Lord's Day. This lodger was a tourist who thought, in folly surely rather than in hardness of heart, to test the religious convictions of an Auld Licht by insisting on paying his bill on a Sabbath morning. He offered the money to Jess, with the warning that if she did not take it now she might never see it. Jess was so kind and good to her lodgers that he could not have known her long who troubled her with this poor trick. She was sorely in need at the time, and entreated the thoughtless man to have some pity on her.

"Now or never," he said, holding out the money.

"Put it on the dresser," said Jess at last, "an' I'll get it in the morn."

The few shillings were laid on the dresser, where they remained, unfingered until Hendry, with Leeby and Jamie, came in from church.

"What siller's that?" asked Hendry, and then Jess confessed what she had done.

"I wonder at ye, woman," said Hendry sternly; and lifting the money he climbed up to the attic with it.

He pushed open the door and confronted the lodger.

"Take back yer siller," he said, laying it on the table, "an' leave my hoose. Man, you're a pitiable critter to tak the chance, when I was oot, o' playin' upon the poverty o' an onweel woman."

It was with such unwonted severity as this that Hendry called upon Jamie to follow him to church; but the boy went off, and did not return till dusk, defiant and miserable. Jess had been so terrified that she forgave him everything for sight of his face, and Hendry prayed for him at family worship with too much unction. But Leeby cried as if her tender heart would break. For a long time Jamie refused to look at her, but at last he broke down.

"If ye go on like that," he said, "I'll gang awa oot an' droon mysel', or be a sojer."

This was no uncommon threat of his, and sometimes, when he went off, banging the door violently, she ran after him and brought him back. This time she only wept the more, and so both went to bed in misery. It was after mid-

night that Jamie rose and crept to Leeby's bedside. Leeby was shaking the bed in her agony. Jess heard what they said.

"Leeby," said Jamie, "dinna greet, an' I'll never do't again."

He put his arms round her, and she kissed him passionately.

"O Jamie," she said, "hae ye prayed to God to forgie ye?"

Jamie did not speak.

"If ye was to die this nicht," cried Leeby, "an' you no made it up wi' God, ye wouldna gang to heaven. Jamie, I canna sleep till ye've made it up wi' God."

But Jamie still hung back. Leeby slipped from her bed and went down on her knees.

"O God, O dear God," she cried, "mak Jamie to pray to you!"

Then Jamie went down on his knees too, and they made it up with God together.

This is a little thing for me to remember all these years, and yet how fresh and sweet it keeps Leeby in my memory.

Away up in the glen, my lonely school house lying deep, as one might say, in a sea of snow, I had many hours in the years long by for thinking of my friends in Thrums and mapping out the future of Leeby and Jamie. I saw Hendry and Jess taken to the churchyard, and Leeby left alone in the house. I saw Jamie fulfil his promise to his mother, and take Leeby, that stainless young woman, far away to London, where they had a home together. Ah, but these were only the idle dreams of a dominie. The Lord willed it otherwise.

THE HUNTER

By OLIVE SCHREINER

(*From "An African Farm"*)

This writer does not announce the date of her birth. We only know that she was married in 1894, soon after the publication of her "Story of an African Farm," and her allegories, "Dreams," and that she is still living in Africa. The "Story of An African Farm" develops her views of the essentials of religion as apart from creeds and conventions, and, in a similar vein, her view of woman's place in the universe not ranked by sex. Aside from the independence of her views, the literary form of one of the chapters in "An African Farm," the allegory of the "Hunter after Truth," has attracted attention, as gathering up the theme of the work in a form of lasting beauty. The Allegory is rare in literature, and Olive Schreiner's name lasts rather as the writer of "Dreams" than as advocate of the freedom of belief, or the emancipation of women.

In certain valleys there was a hunter. Day by day he went to hunt for wild fowl in the woods; and it chanced that once he stood on the shores of a large lake. While he stood waiting in the rushes for the coming of the birds, a great shadow fell on him, and in the water he saw a reflection. He looked up to the sky; but the thing was gone. Then a burning desire came over him to see once again that reflection in the water, and all day he watched and waited; but night came, and it had not returned. Then he

went home with his empty bag, moody and silent. His comrades came questioning about him to know the reason, but he answered them nothing; he sat alone and brooded. Then his friend came to him, and to him he spoke.

"I have seen to-day," he said, "that which I never saw before—a vast white bird, with silver wings outstretched, sailing in the everlasting blue. And now it is as though a great fire burned within my breast. It was but a sheen, a shimmer, a reflection in the water; but now I desire nothing more on earth than to hold her."

His friend laughed.

"It was but a beam playing on the water, or the shadow of your own head. To-morrow you will forget her," he said.

But to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow the hunter walked alone. He sought in the forest and in the woods, by the lakes and among the rushes, but he could not find her. He shot no more wild fowl; what were they to him?

"What ails him?" said his comrades.

"He is mad," said one.

"No, but he is worse," said another; "he would see that which none of us have seen, and make himself a wonder."

"Come, let us forswear his company," said all.

So the hunter walked alone.

One night, as he wandered in the shade, very heart-sore and weeping, an old man stood before him, grander and taller than the sons of men.

"Who are you?" asked the hunter.

"I am Wisdom," answered the old man; "but some men call me Knowledge. All my life I have grown in these valleys; but no man sees me till he has sorrowed much. The eyes must be washed with tears that are to behold me; and, according as a man has suffered, I speak."

And the hunter cried:

"Oh, you who have lived here so long, tell me, what is that great wild bird I have seen sailing in the blue? They would have me believe she is a dream; the shadow of my own head."

The old man smiled.

"Her name is Truth. He who has once seen her never rests again. Till death he desires her."

And the hunter cried:

"Oh, tell me where I may find her."

But the man said:

"You have not suffered enough," and went.

Then the hunter took from his breast the shuttle of Imagination, and wound on it the thread of his Wishes; and all night he sat and wove a net.

In the morning he spread the golden net open on the ground, and into it he threw a few grains of credulity, which his father had left him, and which he kept in his breast pocket. They were like white puff-balls, and when you trod on them a brown dust flew out. Then he sat by to see what would happen. The first that came into the net was a snow-white bird, with dove's eyes, and he sang a beautiful song—"A human-God! a human-God! a human-God!" it sang. The second that came was black and mystical, with dark, lovely eyes, that looked into the depths of your soul, and he sang only this—"Immortality!"

And the hunter took them both in his arms, for he said:

"They are surely of the beautiful family of Truth."

Then came another, green and gold, who sang in a shrill voice, like one crying in the market-place: "Reward after Death! Reward after Death!"

And he said:

"You are not so fair; but you are fair, too," and he took it.

And others came, brightly colored, singing pleasant songs, till all the grains were finished. And the hunter gathered all his birds together, and built a strong iron cage called a new creed, and put all his birds in it.

Then the people came about dancing and singing.

"Oh, happy hunter!" they cried. "Oh, wonderful man! Oh, delightful birds! Oh, lovely songs!"

No one asked where the birds had come from, nor how they had been caught; but they danced and sang before them. And the hunter, too, was glad, for he said:

"Surely Truth is among them. In time she will moult her feathers, and I shall see her snow-white form."

But the time passed, and the people sang and danced; but the hunter's heart grew heavy. He crept alone, as of old, to weep; the terrible desire had awakened again in his

breast. One day, as he sat alone weeping, it chanced that Wisdom met him. He told the old man what he had done.

And Wisdom smiled sadly.

"Many men," he said, "have spread that net for Truth; but they have never found her. On the grains of credulity she will not feed; in the net of wishes her feet cannot be held; in the air of these valleys she will not breathe. The birds you have caught are of the brood of Lies. Lovely and beautiful, but still lies; Truth knows them not."

And the hunter cried out in bitterness:

"And must I then sit still to be devoured of this great burning?"

And the old man said:

"Listen, and in that you have suffered much and wept much, I will tell you what I know. He who sets out to search for Truth must leave these valleys of superstition forever, taking with him not one shred that has belonged to them. Alone he must wander down into the Land of Absolute Negation and Denial; he must abide there; he must resist temptation; when the light breaks he must arise and follow it into the country of dry sunshine. The mountains of stern reality will rise before them; he must climb them; *beyond* them lies Truth."

"And he will hold her fast! he will hold her in his hands!" the hunter cried.

Wisdom shook his head.

"He will never see her, never hold her. The time is not yet."

"Then there is no hope?" cried the hunter.

"There is this," said Wisdom. "Some men have climbed on those mountains; circle above circle of bare rock they have scaled; and, wandering there, in those high regions, some have chanced to pick up on the ground one white, silver feather, dropped from the wing of Truth. And it shall come to pass," said the old man, raising himself prophetically and pointing with his finger to the sky, "it shall come to pass, that, when enough of those silver feathers shall have been gathered by the hands of men, and shall have been woven into a cord, and the cord into a net, that in *that* net Truth may be captured. *Nothing but Truth can hold Truth.*"

The hunter arose. "I will go," he said.

But Wisdom detained him.

"Mark you well—who leaves these valleys *never* returns to them. Though he should weep tears of blood seven days and nights upon the confines, he can never put his foot across them. Left—they are left forever. Upon the road which you would travel there is no reward offered. Who goes, goes freely—for the great love that is in him. The work is his reward."

"I go," said the hunter; "but upon the mountains, tell me, which path shall I take?"

"I am the child of The-Accumulated-Knowledge-of-Ages," said the man; "I can walk only where many men have trodden. On these mountains few feet have passed; each man strikes out a path for himself. He goes at his own peril; my voice he hears no more. I may follow after him, but I cannot go before him."

Then Knowledge vanished.

And the hunter turned. He went to his cage, and with his hands broke down the bars, and the jagged iron tore his flesh. It is sometimes easier to build than to break.

One by one he took his plumed birds and let them fly. But, when he came to his dark-plumed bird, he held it, and looked into his beautiful eyes, and the bird uttered its low, deep cry—"Immortality!"

And he said, quickly, "I cannot part with it. It is not heavy; it eats no food. I will hide it in my breast; I will take it with me." And he buried it there, and covered it over with his cloak.

But the thing he had hidden grew heavier, heavier, heavier—till it lay on his breast like lead. He could not move with it. He could not leave those valleys with it. Then again he took it out and looked at it.

"Oh, my beautiful, my heart's own!" he cried, "may I not keep you?"

He opened his hands sadly.

"Go," he said. "It may happen that in Truth's song one note is like to yours; but *I* shall never hear it."

Sadly he opened his hand, and the bird flew from him forever.

Then from the shuttle of Imagination he took the thread

of his wishes, and threw it on the ground; and the empty shuttle he put into his breast, for the thread was made in those valleys, but the shuttle came from an unknown country. He turned to go, but now the people came about him, howling.

"Fool, hound, demented lunatic!" they cried. "How dared you break your cage and let the birds fly?"

The hunter spoke; but they would not hear him.

"Truth! who is she? Can you eat her? can you drink her? Who has ever seen her? Your birds were real; all could hear them sing! Oh, fool! vile reptile! atheist!" they cried, "you pollute the air."

"Come, let us take up stones and stone him," cried some.

"What affair is it of ours?" said others. "Let the idiot go"; and went away. But the rest gathered up stones and mud and threw at him. At last, when he was bruised and cut, the hunter crept away into the woods. And it was evening about him.

He wandered on and on, and the shade grew deeper. He was on the borders now of the land where it is always night. Then he stepped into it, and there was no light there. With his hands he groped; but each branch as he touched it broke off, and the earth was covered with cinders. At every step his foot sank in, and a fine cloud of impalpable ashes flew up into his face; and it was dark. So he sat down upon a stone and buried his face in his hands, to wait in that Land of Negation and Denial till the light came.

And it was night in his heart also.

Then from the marshes to his right and left cold mists arose and closed about him. A fine, imperceptible rain fell in the dark, and great drops gathered on his hair and clothes. His heart beat slowly, and a numbness crept through all his limbs. Then, looking up, two merry wisp lights came dancing. He lifted his head to look at them. Nearer, nearer they came. So warm, so bright, they danced like stars of fire. They stood before him at last. From the center of the radiating flame in one looked out a woman's face, laughing, dimpled, with streaming yellow hair. In the center of the other were merry laughing ripples, like the bubbles on a glass of wine. They danced before him.

"Who are you," asked the hunter, "who alone come to me in my solitude and darkness?"

"We are the twins Sensuality," they cried. "Our father's name is Human-Nature, and our mother's name is Excess. We are as old as the hills and rivers, as old as the first man, but we never die," they laughed.

"Oh, let me wrap my arms about you!" cried the first; "they are soft and warm. Your heart is frozen now, but I will make it beat. Oh, come to me!"

"I will pour my hot life into you," said the second; "your brain is numb, and your limbs are dead now; but they shall live with a fierce free life. Oh, let me pour it in!"

"Oh, follow us," they cried, "and live with us. Nobler hearts than yours have sat here in this darkness to wait, and they have come to us and we to them; and they have never left us, never. All else is a delusion, but *we* are real, we are real. Truth is a shadow; the valleys of superstition are a farce; the earth is of ashes, the trees all rotten; but we—feel us—we live! You cannot doubt us. Feel us, how warm we are! Oh, come to us! Come with us!"

Nearer and nearer round his head they hovered, and the cold drops melted on his forehead. The bright light shot into his eyes, dazzling him, and the frozen blood began to run. And he said:

"Yes; why should I die here in this awful darkness? They are warm, they melt my frozen blood!" and he stretched out his hands to take them.

Then in a moment there arose before him the image of the thing he had loved, and his hand dropped to his side.

"Oh, come to us!" they cried.

But he buried his face.

"You dazzle my eyes," he cried; "you make my heart warm; but you cannot give me what I desire. I will wait here—wait till I die. Go!"

He covered his face with his hands and would not listen; and when he looked up again they were two twinkling stars, that vanished in the distance.

And the long, long night rolled on.

All who leave the valley of superstition pass through that dark land; but some go through it in a few days, some linger there for months, some for years, and some die there.

At last for the hunter a faint light played along the horizon, and he rose to follow it; and he reached that light at last, and stepped into the broad sunshine. Then before him rose the almighty mountains of Dry-facts and Realities. The clear sunshine played on them, and the tops were lost in the clouds. At the foot many paths ran up. An exultant cry burst from the hunter. He chose the straightest and began to climb; and the rocks and ridges resounded with his song. They had exaggerated; after all, it was not so high, nor was the road so steep! A few days, a few weeks, a few months at most, and then the top! Not one feather only would he pick up; he would gather all that other men had found—weave the net—capture Truth—hold her fast—touch her with his hands—clasp her.

He laughed in the merry sunshine, and sang loud. Victory was very near. Nevertheless, after a while the path grew steeper. He needed all his breath for climbing, and the singing died away. On the right and left rose huge rocks, devoid of lichen or moss, and in the lava-like earth chasms yawned. Here and there he saw a sheen of white bones. Now, too, the path began to grow less and less marked; then it became a mere trace, with a footmark here and there; then it ceased altogether. He sang no more, but struck forth a path for himself, until he reached a mighty wall of rock, smooth and without break, stretching as far as the eye could see. "I will rear a stair against it; and, once this wall climbed, I shall be almost there," he said bravely, and worked. With his shuttle of imagination he dug out stones; but half of them would not fit, and half a month's work would roll down because those below were ill-chosen. But the hunter worked on, saying always to himself, "Once this wall climbed, I shall be almost there. This great work ended!"

At last he came out upon the top, and he looked about him. Far below rolled the white mist over the valleys of superstition, and above him towered the mountains. They had seemed low before; they were of an immeasurable height now, from crown to foundation surrounded by walls of rock, that rose tier above tier in mighty circles. Upon them played the eternal sunshine. He uttered a wild cry. He bowed himself on to the earth, and when he rose his

face was white. In absolute silence he walked on. He was very silent now. In those high regions the rarefied air is hard to breathe by those born in the valleys; every breath he drew hurt him, and the blood oozed out from the tips of his fingers. Before the next wall of rock he began to work. The height of this seemed infinite, and he said nothing. The sound of his tool rang night and day upon the iron rocks into which he cut steps. Years passed over him, yet he worked on; but the wall towered up always above him to heaven. Sometimes he prayed that a little moss or lichen might spring up on those bare walls to be a companion to him; but it never came.

And the years rolled on; he counted them by the steps he had cut—a few for a year—only a few. He sang no more; he said no more, "I will do this or that"—he only worked. And at night, when the twilight settled down, there looked out at him from the holes and crevices in the rocks strange wild faces.

"Stop your work, you lonely man, and speak to us," they cried.

"My salvation is in work. If I should stop but for one moment you would creep down upon me," he replied. And they put out their long necks further.

"Look down into the crevice at your feet," they said. "See what lie there—white bones! As brave and strong a man as you climbed to these rocks. And he looked up. He saw there was no use in striving; he would never hold Truth, never see her, never find her. So he lay down here, for he was very tired. He went to sleep forever. He put himself to sleep. Sleep is very tranquil. You are not lonely when you are asleep, neither do your hands ache, nor your heart." And the hunter laughed between his teeth.

"Have I torn from my heart all that was dearest; have I wandered alone in the land of night; have I resisted temptation; have I dwelt where the voice of my kind is never heard, and labored alone, to lie down and be food for you, ye harpies?"

He laughed fiercely; and the Echoes of Despair slunk away, for the laugh of a brave, strong heart is as a death-blow to them.

Nevertheless they crept out again and looked at him.

"Do you know that your hair is white?" they said, "that your hands begin to tremble like a child's? Do you see that the point of your shuttle is gone?—it is cracked already. If you should ever climb this stair," they said, "it will be your last. You will never climb another."

And he answered, "*I know it!*" and worked on.

The old, thin hands cut the stones ill and jaggedly, for the fingers were stiff and bent The beauty and the strength of the man were gone.

At last, an old, wizened, shrunken face looked out above the rocks. It saw the eternal mountains rise with walls to the white clouds; but its work was done.

The old hunter folded his tired hands and lay down by the precipice where he had worked away his life. It was the sleeping time at last. Below him over the valléys rolled the thick white mist. Once it broke; and through the gap the dying eyes looked down on the trees and fields of their childhood. From afar seemed borne to him the cry of his own wild birds, and he heard the noise of people singing as they danced. And he thought he heard among them the voices of his old comrades; and he saw far off the sunlight shine on his early home. And great tears gathered in the hunter's eyes.

"Ah! they who die there do not die alone," he cried.

Then the mists rolled together again; and he turned his eyes away.

"I have sought," he said; "for long years have I labored; but I have not found her. I have not rested, I have not repined, and I have not seen her! now my strength is gone. Where I lie down worn out, other men will stand, young and fresh. By the steps that I have cut they will climb; by the stairs that I have built they will mount. They will never know the name of the man who made them. At the clumsy work they will laugh; when the stones roll they will curse me. But they will mount, and on *my* work; they will climb, and by *my* stair! They will find her, and through me! And no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

The tears rolled from beneath the shriveled eyelids. If Truth had appeared above him in the clouds now he could not have seen her; the mist of death was in his eyes.

"My soul hears their glad step coming," he said; "and they shall mount! they shall mount!" He raised his shriveled hand to his eyes.

Then slowly from the white sky above, through the still air, came something falling, falling, falling. Softly it fluttered down, and dropped onto the breast of the dying man. He felt it with his hands. It was a feather. He died holding it.

UNCLE REMUS. HIS SONGS AND HIS SAYINGS

(1876)

BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS (1849–1909)

These stories first appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution,* and at once brought the young unknown journalist to the attention of learned students of folk-lore, as well as endeared him to all children and lovers of humanity. The stories represent a unique order of tale—the modern negro dialect setting out the old beast-fable. From Georgia to India these same stories are said, by the learned, to be common stock. Mr. Harris wrote them from love of their humor and from his associations with the old negro story-tellers, rather than from any learned impulse, or from any sense that he was thus clasping hands across the centuries with such famous story writers as La Fontaine and Æsop.

I

THE WONDERFUL TAR-BABY STORY[1]

"DIDN'T the fox *never* catch the rabbit, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy the next evening.

"He come mighty nigh it, honey, sho's you born—Brer Fox did. One day after Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat cala-

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mus root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turkentime, en fix up a contrapshun wat he call a Tar-Baby, en he tuck dish yer Tar-Baby en he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer to see wat he news wuz gwineter be. En he didn't hatter wait long, nudder, kaze bimeby here come Brer Rabbit pacin' down de road—lippity-clippity, clippity-lippity—dez ez sassy ez a jay-bird. Brer Fox, he lay low. Brer Rabbit come prancin' 'long twel he spy de Tar-Baby, en den he fotch up on his behime legs like he wuz 'tonished. De Tar-Baby, she sot dar, she did, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Mawnin'!' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee—'nice wedder dis mawnin',' sezee.

"Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nothin', en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'How duz yo' sym'tums seem ter segashuate?' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Brer Fox, he wink his eye slow, en lay low, en de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nothin'.

"'How you come on, den? Is you deaf?' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Kaze if you is, I kin holler louder.'

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Youer stuck up, dat's w'at you is,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'en I'm gwineter kyore you, dat's w'at I'm a gwineter do,' sezee.

"Brer Fox, he sorter chuckle in his stummuck, he did, but Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nothin'.

"'I'm gwineter larn you howter talk ter 'spectubble fokes ef hit's de las' ack,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Ef you don't take off your hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwineter bus' you wide open,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Brer Rabbit keep on axin' 'im, en de Tar-Baby, she keep on sayin' nothin', twel present'y Brer Rabbit draw back wid his fis', he did, en blip he tuck 'er side er de head. Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses jug. His fis' stuck, en he can't pull loose. De tar hilt 'im. But Tar-Baby, she stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Ef you don't lemme loose, I'll knock you agin,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, en wid dat he fotch 'er a wipe wid de udder han', en dat stuck. Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nothin', en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Tu'n me loose, fo' I kick de natal stuffin' outen you,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, but de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nothin'. She des hilt on, en den Brer Rabbit lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox, he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit squall out dat ef de Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose he butt' er cranksided. En den he butted, en his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox, he sa'ntered fort', lookin' des ex innercent ez one er you' mamy's mockin'-birds.

"'Howdy, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. 'You look sorter stuck up dis mawnin',' sezee, en den he rolled on de ground', en laughed en laughed twel he couldn't laugh no mo'. 'I speck you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I done laid in some calamus root, en I ain't gwineter take no skuse,' sez Brer Fox, sezee."

Here Uncle Remus paused, and drew a two-pound yam out of the ashes.

"Did the fox eat the rabbit?" asked the little boy to whom the story had been told.

"Dat's all de fur de tale goes," replied the old man. "He mout, en den agin he moutent. Some say Jedge B'ar come 'long en loosed 'im—some say he didn't. I hear Miss Sally callin'. You better run 'long."

II

HOW MR. RABBIT WAS TOO SHARP FOR MR. FOX

"Uncle Remus," said the little boy one evening, when he had found the old man with little or nothing to do, "did the fox kill and eat the rabbit when he caught him with the Tar-Baby?"

"Law, honey, ain't I tell you 'bout dat?" replied the old darkey, chuckling slyly. "I 'clar ter grashus I ought er tole you dat, but old man Nod wuz ridin' on my eyelids 'twel a leetle mo'n I'd a dis'member'd my own name, en den on to dat her come you' mammy hollerin' atter you.

"W'at I tell you w'en I fus' begin? I tole you Brer Rabbit wuz a monstus soon creetur; leas'ways dat's w'at I laid out fer ter tell you. Well, den, honey, don't you go en

make no udder calkalashuns, kaze in dem days Brer Rabbit en his fambly wuz at de head er de gang w'en enny racket wuz on han', en dar dey stayed. 'Fo' you begins fer ter wipe you' eyes 'bout Brer Rabbit, you wait en see whar'bouts Brer Rabbit gwineter ter fetch up at. But dat's needer yer ner dar.

"W'en Brer Fox fine Brer Rabbit mixt up wid de Tar-Baby, he feel mighty good, en he roll on de groun' en laff. Bimeby he up'n say, sezee:

"'Well, I speck I got you dis time, Brer Rabbit,' sezee; 'maybe I aint, but I speck I is. You been runnin' roun' here sassin' atter me a mighty long time, but I speck you done come ter de een' er de row. You bin cuttin' up yo' capers en bouncin' 'roun' in dis neighberhood ontwel you come ter b'leeve yo'se'f de boss er de whole gang. En den youer allers some'rs whar you got no bizness,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. 'Who ax you fer ter come en strike up a 'quaintance wid dish yer Tar-Baby? En who stuck you up dar whar you iz? Nobody in de roun' worril. You des tuck em jam yo'se'f on dat Tar-Baby widout waitin' fer enny invite,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en dar you is, en dar you'll stay twel I fixes up a bresh-pile and fires her up, kaze I'm gwineter bobbycue you dis day, sho,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den Brer Rabbit talk mighty 'umble.

"'I don't keer w'at you do wid me, Brer Fox,' sezee, 'so you don't fling me in dat brier-patch. Roas' me, Brer Fox,' sezee, 'but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"'Hit's so much trouble fer ter kindle a fier,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'dat I speck I'll hatter hang you,' sezee.

"'Hang me des ez high as you please, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, "but do fer de Lord's sake don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"'I ain't got no string,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en now I speck I'll hatter drown you,' sezee.

"'Drown me des ez deep ez you please, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"'Dey ain't no water nigh,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en now I speck I'll hatter skin you,' sezee.

"'Skin me, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'snatch out my eyeballs, t'ar out my years by de roots, en cut off my

legs,' sezee, 'but do please, Brer Fox, don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"Co'se Brer Fox wanter hurt Brer Rabit bad ez he kin, so he cotch 'im by de behime legs en slung 'im right in de middle er de brier-patch. Dar wuz a considerable flutter whar Brer Rabbit struck de bushes, en Brer Fox sorter hang 'roun' fer ter see w'at wuz gwineter happen. Bimeby he hear somebody call 'im, en way up de hill he see Brer Rabbit settin' cross-legged on a chinkapin log koamin' de pitch outen his har wid a chip. Den Brer Fox know dat he bin swop off mighty bad. Brer Rabbit wuz bleedzed fer ter fling back some er his sass, en he holler out:

"'Bred en bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox—bred en bawn in a brier-patch!' en wid dat he skip out des ez lively ez a cricket in de embers."

AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR[1]

(1830)

By HONORE DE BALZAC (1799–1850)

Balzac so completely identifies himself with the work he has in hand that he must not be judged by any other standard than the naturalism of his creations. He may have faults of execution, but his people and events are thoroughly real, and all interest centers in his types. Brunétière notes that of these types one has the widest possible democratic range, but that Balzac has nothing of the aristocrat in his composition. His atmosphere, so noteworthy in the story before us, is always a prominent feature of his realism. Frequently it exists in a system of ideas—of impressions—rather than in a physical presentation of locality, as in this story the feeling of the French Revolution—fear constantly impending—is stronger than the sense of Paris streets.

On the twenty-second of January, 1793, about eight o'clock in the evening, an old lady was descending the steep hill which ends in front of the church of St. Laurent, on Faubourg St.-Martin, Paris. It had snowed so hard all day that footfalls could scarcely be heard. The streets were deserted; the not unnatural dread inspired by the silence was intensified by the terror under which France was then groaning; so that the old lady had not as yet met anybody; her

[1] Reprinted from "Little French Masterpieces," by permission of the publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

sight, which had long been poor, made it impossible for her to see, in the distance, by the dim light of the street lanterns, the few people who were scattered about like ghosts in the broad highway of the faubourg. She went her way courageously, alone, through that solitude, as if her age were a talisman certain to preserve her from all evil.

When she had passed Rue des Morts, she fancied that she could distinguish the firm and heavy step of a man walking behind her. It seemed to her that it was not the first time that she had heard that sound; she was terrified at the thought that she had been followed, and she tried to walk even faster, in order to reach a brightly lighted shop, hoping to be able to set at rest in the light the suspicions which had seized her. As soon as she had stepped beyond the horizontal rays of light that shone from the shop, she suddenly turned her head and caught sight of a human figure in the fog; that indistinct glimpse was enough for her; she staggered for an instant under the weight of the fear which oppressed her, for she no longer doubted that she had been attended by the stranger from the first step that she had taken outside of her home; and the frantic longing to escape a spy gave her additional strength. Incapable of reasoning, she quickened her pace, as if she could possibly elude a man who was surely more active than she. After running for some minutes, she reached a pastry-cook's shop, rushed in, and fell rather than sat down upon a chair in front of the counter.

The instant that she rattled the latch of the door, a young woman, who was engaged in embroidering, raised her eyes, recognized through the glass door the old-fashioned mantle of violet silk in which the old lady was wrapped, and hastily opened a drawer, as if to take out something which she intended to give her. Not only did the young woman's movement and expression denote a wish to be rid of the stranger at once, as if she were one of those people whom one is not glad to see, but she also uttered an impatient exclamation when she found the drawer empty; then, without glancing at the lady, she rushed from behind the counter, toward the back shop, and called her husband, who appeared instantly.

"Where have you put —— ——?" she asked him with

a mysterious expression, indicating the old lady by a glance, and not finishing her sentence.

Although the pastry cook could see only the enormous black silk bonnet, surrounded by violet ribbons, which the stranger wore upon her head, he disappeared, after a glance at his wife, which seemed to say: "Do you suppose that I am going to leave *that* on your counter?"

Amazed at the old lady's silence and immobility, the tradeswoman walked toward her, and as she examined her she was conscious of a feeling of compassion, and perhaps of curiosity as well. Although the stranger's complexion was naturally sallow, like that of a person vowed to secret austerities, it was easy to see that some recent emotion had made her even paler than usual. Her bonnet was so arranged as to conceal her hair, which was presumably whitened by age, for the neatness of the collar of her dress indicated that she did not wear powder. That lack of adornment imparted to her face a sort of religious asceticism. Her features were serious and dignified. In the old days the manners and customs of people of quality were so different from those of people belonging to the lower classes, that one could easily distinguish a person of noble birth. So that the young woman was convinced that the stranger was a *ci-devant,* and that she had belonged to the court.

"Madame," she said involuntarily and with respect, forgetting that that title was proscribed.

The old lady did not reply. She kept her eyes fastened upon the shop window, as if some terrifying object were there apparent.

"What's the matter with you, citizeness?" asked the proprietor, who reappeared at that moment.

The citizen pastry cook aroused the lady from her reverie by handing her a little pasteboard box covered with blue paper.

"Nothing, nothing, my friends," she replied in a mild voice.

She looked up at the pastry cook as if to bestow a grateful glance upon him; but when she saw a red cap on his head she uttered an exclamation:

"Ah! you have betrayed me!"

The young woman and her husband replied by a gesture

of horror which made the stranger blush, perhaps for having suspected them, perhaps with pleasure.

"Excuse me," she said with childlike gentleness.

Then, taking a louis d'or from her pocket, she handed it to the pastry cook.

"This is the price agreed upon," she added.

There is a sort of poverty which the poor are quick to divine. The pastry cook and his wife looked at each other and then at the old lady, exchanging the same thought. That louis d'or was evidently the last. The lady's hands trembled as she held out that coin, at which she gazed sorrowfully but without avarice; but she seemed to realize the full extent of the sacrifice. Fasting and poverty were written upon that face, in lines as legible as those of fear and ascetic habits. There were vestiges of past splendor in her clothes: they were worn silk; a neat though old-fashioned cloak, and lace carefully mended—in a word, the rags and tatters of opulence. The trades people, wavering between pity and self-interest, began by relieving their conscience in words:

"But, citizeness, you seem very weak——"

"Would madame like something to refresh herself?" asked the woman, cutting her husband short.

"We have some very good soup," added the pastry cook.

"It's so cold! perhaps madame was chilled by her walk? But you can rest here and warm yourself a little."

"The devil is not as black as he is painted," cried the pastry cook.

Won by the kind tone of the charitable shopkeeper's words, the lady admitted that she had been followed by a stranger, and that she was afraid to return home alone.

"Is that all?" replied the man with the red cap. "Wait for me, citizeness."

He gave the louis to his wife; then, impelled by that species of gratitude which finds its way into the heart of a tradesman when he receives an extravagant price for goods of moderate value, he went to don his national guardsman's uniform, took his hat, thrust his sabre into his belt, and reappeared under arms. But his wife had had time to reflect; and, as in many other hearts, reflection closed the open hand of kindliness. Perturbed in mind, and fearing that her husband might become involved in some dangerous affair, the

pastry cook's wife tried to stop him by pulling the skirt of his coat; but, obeying a charitable impulse, the good man at once offered to escort the old lady.

"It seems that the man who frightened the citizeness is still prowling about the shop," said the young woman, nervously.

"I am afraid so," the lady artlessly replied.

"Suppose he should be a spy? Suppose it was a conspiracy? Don't go with her, and take back the box."

These words, whispered in the pastry cook's ear by his wife, congealed the impromptu courage which had moved him.

"I'll just go out and say two words to him, and rid you of him in short order!" cried the man, opening the door and rushing out.

The old lady, passive as a child and almost dazed, resumed her seat. The worthy tradesman soon reappeared; his face, which was naturally red, and moreover was flushed by the heat of his ovens, had suddenly become livid; he was so terribly frightened that his legs trembled and his eyes resembled a drunken man's.

"Do you mean to have our heads cut off, you miserable aristocrat?" he cried angrily. "Just let us see your heels; don't ever show your face here again, and don't count on me to supply you with materials for a conspiracy!"

As he spoke, the pastry cook tried to take from the old lady the small box, which she had put in one of her pockets. But no sooner did the man's insolent hands touch her clothing, than the stranger, preferring to brave the dangers of the street with no other defender than God, rather than to lose what she had purchased, recovered the agility of her youth; she rushed to the door, opened it abruptly, and vanished from the eyes of the dazed and trembling woman and her husband.

As soon as the stranger was out of doors, she walked rapidly away; but her strength failed her, for she heard the snow creak beneath the heavy step of the spy, by whom she was pitilessly followed. She was obliged to stop, and he stopped; she dared neither speak to him nor look at him, whether as a result of the fear which gripped her heart, or from lack of intelligence. She continued her way, walking

slowly; thereupon the man slackened his pace, so as to remain at a distance, which enabled him to keep his eye upon her. He seemed to be the very shadow of the old woman. The clock was striking nine when the silent couple again passed the church of St. Laurent. It is in the nature of all souls, even the weakest, that a feeling of tranquility should succeed violent agitation; for, although our feelings are manifold, our bodily powers are limited. And so the stranger, meeting with no injury at the hands of her supposed persecutor, chose to discover in him a secret friend, zealous to protect her; she recalled all the circumstances which had attended the unknown's appearance, as if to find plausible arguments in favor of that comforting opinion; and she took pleasure in detecting good rather than evil intentions in his behavior.

Forgetting the terror which that man had inspired in the pastry cook, she walked with an assured step into the upper parts of Faubourg St.-Martin. After half an hour she reached a house near the junction of the main street of the faubourg and that which leads to the Barrière de Pantin. Even to-day, that spot is one of the most solitary in all Paris. The north wind, blowing over the Buttes Chaumont and from Belleville, whistled through the houses, or rather the hovels, scattered about in that almost uninhabited valley, where the dividing walls are built of earth and bones. That desolate spot seemed to be the natural refuge of poverty and despair. The man who had persisted in following the wretched creature who was bold enough to walk through those silent streets at night, seemed impressed by the spectacle presented to his eyes. He became thoughtful, and stood in evident hesitation, in the dim light of a lantern whose feeble rays barely pierced the mist.

Fear gave eyes to the old woman, who fancied that she could detect something sinister in the stranger's features; her former terror reawoke, and, taking advantage of the uncertainty which had checked his advance, to glide in the darkness toward the door of the solitary house, she pressed a spring and disappeared with magical rapidity.

The stranger, motionless as a statue, gazed at that house, which was in some measure the type of the wretched dwellings of the faubourg. That unstable hovel, built of rough

stones, was covered with a layer of yellow plaster, so cracked that it seemed in danger of falling before the slightest gust of wind. The roof, of dark brown tiles covered with moss, had sunk in several places so that it seemed likely to give way under the weight of the snow. On each floor there were three windows, the sashes of which, rotted by the dampness and shrunken by the heat of the sun, made it clear that the cold air must find an easy entrance into the rooms. That isolated house resembled an old tower which time had forgotten to destroy. A faint light shone through the irregular windows of the attic at the top of the tumble-down structure, while all the rest of the house was in absolute darkness. The old woman climbed, not without difficulty, the steep, rough stair-case, which was supplied with a rope instead of a baluster; she knocked softly at the door of the apartment in the attic, and dropped hastily upon a chair which an old man offered her.

"Hide! hide yourself!" she said. "Although we go out very seldom, everything that we do is known; our footsteps are watched."

"What is there new, pray?" asked another old woman who was seated by the fire.

"The man who was prowling around the house last night followed me to-night."

At these words the three occupants of the attic looked at each other with indications of profound terror on their faces. The old man was the least moved of the three, perhaps because he was in the greatest danger. Under the weight of a great calamity, or under the yoke of persecution, a courageous man begins, so to speak, by preparing to sacrifice himself; he looks upon his days simply as so many victories over destiny. The eyes of the two women, fastened upon this old man, made it easy to divine that he was the sole object of their intense anxiety.

"Why despair of God, my sisters?" he said in a low but powerful voice. "We sang His praises amid the cries of the assassins and the shrieks of the dying at the Carmelite convent. If He decreed that I should be saved from that butchery, it was doubtless because He reserved me for another destiny, which I must accept without a murmur. God protects His people, He may dispose of

them at His pleasure. It is of you, not of me, we must think."

"No," said one of the old women; "what are our lives compared with that of a priest?"

"When once I found myself outside of the Abbey of Chelles, I looked upon myself as dead," said that one of the two women who had not gone out.

"Here," replied the other, handing the priest the little box, "here are the wafers.—But," she cried, "I hear some one coming up the stairs."

Thereupon all three listened intently. The noise ceased.

"Do not be alarmed," said the priest, "if some one should try to enter. A person upon whose fidelity we can rely has undoubtedly taken all necessary measures to cross the frontier, and will come here to get the letters which I have written to the Duc de Langeais and to the Marquis de Beauséant, asking them to consider the means of rescuing you from this terrible country, from the death or destitution which awaits you here."

"Then you do not mean to go with us?" cried the two nuns gently, with manifestations of despair.

"My place is where there are victims," said the priest simply.

They held their peace and gazed at their companion with devout admiration.

"Sister Martha," he said, addressing the nun who had gone to buy the wafers, "the messenger I speak of will reply *'Fiat voluntas'* to the word *'Hosanna.'*"

"There is some one on the stairs!" cried the other nun, opening the door of a hiding place under the lower part of the roof.

This time they could plainly hear, amid the profound silence, the footsteps of a man upon the stairs, which were covered with ridges of hardened mud. The priest crept with difficulty into a sort of cupboard, and the nuns threw over him a few pieces of apparel.

"You may close the door, Sister Agatha," he said in a muffled voice.

The priest was hardly hidden when three taps on the door caused a shock to the two holy women, who consulted each other with their eyes, afraid to utter a single word.

Each of them seemed to be about sixty years old. Secluded from the world for forty years, they were like plants habituated to the air of a hothouse, which wilt if they are taken from it. Accustomed to the life of a convent, they were unable to imagine any other life. One morning, their gratings having been shattered, they shuddered to find themselves free. One can readily imagine the species of imbecility which the events of the Revolution had produced in their innocent minds. Incapable of reconciling their conventual ideas with the difficult problems of life, and not even understanding their situation, they resembled children who had been zealously cared for hitherto, and who, deserted by their motherly protector, prayed instead of weeping. And so, in face of the danger which they apprehended at that moment, they remained mute and passive, having no conception of any other defense than Christian resignation.

The man who desired to enter interpreted that silence to suit himself; he opened the door and appeared abruptly before them. The two nuns shuddered as they recognized the man who had been prowling about their house, making inquiries about them, for some time. They did not move, but gazed at him with anxious curiosity, after the manner of the children of savage tribes, who examine strangers in silence. He was tall and stout; but there was nothing in his manner, or appearance, to indicate an evil-minded man. He imitated the immobility of the nuns, and moved his eyes slowly about the room in which he stood.

Two straw mats, laid upon boards, served the two nuns as beds. There was a single table in the center of the room, and upon it a copper candlestick, a few plates, three knives, and a round loaf. The fire on the hearth was very low, and a few sticks of wood piled in a corner testified to the poverty of the two occupants. The walls, covered with an ancient layer of paint, demonstrated the wretched condition of the roof, for stains like brown threads marked the intrusion of the rain-water. A relic, rescued doubtless during the pillage of the Abbey of Chelles, adorned the mantel. Three chairs, two chests, and a wretched commode completed the furniture of the room. A door beside the chimney indicated the existence of an inner chamber.

The inventory of the cell was speedily made by the per-

son who had thrust himself into the bosom of that group under such alarming auspices. A sentiment of compassion was expressed upon his face, and he cast a kindly glance upon the two women, but seemed at least as embarrassed as they. The strange silence preserved by all three lasted but a short time, for the stranger at last divined the mental weakness and the inexperience of the two poor creatures, and he said to them in a voice which he tried to soften: "I do not come here as an enemy, citizenesses."

He paused, and then resumed: "My sisters, if any misfortune should happen to you, be sure that I have had no part in it. I have a favor to ask of you."

They still remained silent.

"If I annoy you, if I embarrass you, tell me so frankly, and I will go; but understand that I am entirely devoted to you; that if there is any service that I can do you, you may employ me without fear; that I alone perhaps am above the law, as there is no longer a king."

There was such a ring of truth in these words that Sister Agatha, the one of the two nuns who belonged to the family of Langeais, and whose manners seemed to indicate that she had formerly been familiar with magnificent festivities and had breathed the air of courts, instantly pointed to one of the chairs, as if to request their guest to be seated. The stranger manifested a sort of mixture of pleasure and melancholy when he saw that gesture; and he waited until the two venerable women were seated, before seating himself.

"You have given shelter," he continued, "to a venerable unsworn priest, who miraculously escaped the massacre at the Carmelite convent."

"*Hosanna!*" said Sister Agatha, interrupting the stranger, and gazing at him with anxious interest.

"I don't think that that is his name," he replied.

"But, monsieur," said Sister Martha hastily, "we haven't any priest here, and——"

"In that case you must be more careful and more prudent," retorted the stranger gently, reaching to the table and taking up a breviary. "I do not believe that you know Latin, and——"

He did not continue, for the extraordinary emotion depicted on the faces of the unhappy nuns made him feel that

he had gone too far; they were trembling, and their eyes were filled with tears.

"Do not be alarmed," he said to them cheerily; "I know the name of your guest and your names; and three days ago I was informed of your destination and of your devotion to the venerable Abbé of ——"

"Hush!" said Sister Agatha innocently, putting her finger to her lips.

"You see, my sisters, that if I had formed the detestable plan of betraying you, I might already have done it more than once."

When he heard these words, the priest emerged from his prison and appeared in the middle of the room.

"I cannot believe, monsieur," he said to the stranger, "that you are one of our persecutors, and I trust you. What do you want with me?"

The priest's saintlike confidence, the nobility of soul that shone in all his features, would have disarmed an assassin. The mysterious personage who had enlivened that scene of destitution and resignation gazed for a moment at the group formed by those three; then he assumed a confidential tone, and addressed the priest in these words:

"Father, I have come to implore you to celebrate a mortuary mass for the repose of the soul of a—a consecrated person, whose body, however, will never lie in holy ground."

The priest involuntarily shuddered. The two nuns, not understanding as yet to whom the stranger referred, stood with necks outstretched, and faces turned toward the two men, in an attitude of intense curiosity. The priest scrutinized the stranger; unfeigned anxiety was depicted upon his face, and his eyes expressed the most ardent entreaty.

"Very well," replied the priest; "to-night, at midnight, return here, and I shall be ready to celebrate the only funeral service which we can offer in expiation of the crime to which you refer."

The stranger started; but a feeling of satisfaction, at once grateful and solemn, seemed to triumph over some secret grief. Having respectfully saluted the priest and the two holy women, he disappeared, manifesting a sort of mute gratitude which was understood by those three noble hearts. About two hours after this scene the stranger returned,

knocked softly at the attic door, and was admitted by Mademoiselle de Beauséant, who escorted him into the second room of that humble lodging, where everything had been prepared for the ceremony.

Between two flues of the chimney, the nuns had placed the old commode, whose antiquated shape was covered by a magnificent altar-cloth of green silk. A large crucifix of ebony and ivory, fastened upon the discolored wall, heightened the effect of its bareness and inevitably attracted the eye. Four slender little tapers, which the sisters had succeeded in standing upon that improvised altar by fixing them in sealing wax, cast a pale light, which the wall reflected dimly. That faint gleam barely lighted the rest of the room; but, in that it confined its illumination to the consecrated objects, it resembled a ray of light from heaven upon that undecorated altar. The floor was damp. The attic roof, which sloped sharply on both sides, had various cracks through which a biting wind blew. Nothing less stately could be imagined, and yet perhaps there could be nothing more solemn than this lugubrious ceremony.

A silence so profound that it would have enabled them to hear the faintest sound on distant thoroughfares, diffused a sort of somber majesty over that nocturnal scene. In short, the grandeur of the occasion contrasted so strikingly with the poverty of the surroundings that the result was a sensation of religious awe. The two old nuns, kneeling on the damp floor on either side of the altar, heedless of the deadly moisture, prayed in unison with the priest, who, clad in his pontifical vestments, prepared a golden chalice adorned with precious stones, a consecrated vessel rescued doubtless from the plunderers of the Abbey of Chelles. Beside that pyx, an object of regal magnificence, were the water and wine destined for the sacrament, in two glasses hardly worthy of the lowest tavern. In default of a missal, the priest had placed his breviary on a corner of the altar. A common plate was provided for the washing of those innocent hands, pure of bloodshed. All was majestic, and yet paltry; poor, but noble; profane and holy in one. The stranger knelt piously between the two nuns. But suddenly, when he noticed a band of crape on the chalice and on the crucifix—for, having nothing to indicate the purpose of that

mortuary mass, the priest had draped God Himself in mourning—he was assailed by such an overpowering memory that drops of sweat gathered upon his broad forehead. The four silent actors in that scene gazed at each other mysteriously; then their hearts, acting upon one another, communicated their sentiments to each other and became blended into the one emotion of religious pity; it was as if their thoughts had evoked the royal martyr whose remains had been consumed by quicklime, but whose shade stood before them in all its royal majesty. They celebrated an *obit* without the body of the deceased. Beneath those disjointed tiles and laths, four Christians interceded with God for a king of France, and performed his obsequies without a bier. It was the purest of all possible devotions, an amazing act of fidelity performed without one thought of self. Doubtless, in the eyes of God, it was like the glass of water which is equal to the greatest virtues. The whole of monarchy was there, in the prayers of a priest and of two poor nuns; but perhaps the Revolution, too, was represented, by that man whose face betrayed too much remorse not to cause a belief that he was acting in obedience to an impulse of unbounded repentance.

Instead of saying the Latin words: *"Introibo ad altare Dei,"* etc., the priest, obeying a divine inspiration, looked at the three persons who represented Christian France, and said to them, in words which effaced the poverty of that wretched place:

"We are about to enter into God's sanctuary!"

At these words, uttered with most impressive unction, a thrill of holy awe seized the stranger and the two nuns. Not beneath the arches of St. Peter's at Rome could God have appeared with more majesty than He then appeared in that abode of poverty, before the eyes of those Christians; so true it is that between man and Him every intermediary seems useless, and that He derives His grandeur from Himself alone. The stranger's fervor was genuine, so that the sentiment which joined the prayers of those four servants of God and the king was unanimous. The sacred words rang out like celestial music amid the silence. There was a moment when tears choked the stranger's voice; it was during the paternoster. The priest added to it this Latin prayer,

which the stranger evidently understood: "*Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse!* (And forgive the regicides even as Louis XVI himself forgave them!)"

The two nuns saw two great tears leave a moist trace on the manly cheeks of the stranger, and fall to the floor. The Office of the Dead was recited. The *Domine salvum fac regem,* chanted in a low voice, touched the hearts of those faithful royalists, who reflected that the infant king, for whom they were praying to the Most High at that moment, was a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. The stranger shuddered at the thought that there might still be committed a new crime, in which he would doubtless be compelled to take part. When the service was at an end, the priest motioned to the two nuns to withdraw. As soon as he was alone with the stranger, he walked toward him with a mild and melancholy expression, and said to him in a fatherly tone:

"My son, if you have dipped your hands in the blood of the martyr king, confess to me. There is no sin which, in God's eyes, may not be effaced by repentance so touching and so sincere as yours seems to be."

At the first words of the priest, the stranger made an involuntary gesture of terror; but his face resumed its tranquility, and he met the astonished priest's eye with calm assurance.

"Father," he said to him in a perceptibly tremulous voice, "no one is more innocent than I of bloodshed."

"I am bound to believe you," said the priest.

There was a pause, during which he examined the penitent more closely; then, persisting in taking him for one of those timid members of the Convention who sacrificed a consecrated and inviolate head in order to preserve their own, he continued in a solemn voice:

"Remember, my son, that to be absolved from that great crime, it is not enough not to have actually taken part in it. Those who, when they might have defended their king, left their swords in the scabbard, will have a very heavy account to settle with the King of Heaven. Ah, yes!" added the old priest, shaking his head with a most expressive movement, "yes, very heavy! for, by remaining idle, they became the involuntary accomplices of that ghastly crime."

"Do you think," inquired the thunderstruck stranger, "that indirect participation will be punished? Is the soldier guilty who is ordered to join the shooting squad?"

The priest hesitated. Pleased with the dilemma in which he had placed that puritan of royalty by planting him between the dogma of passive obedience, which, according to the partisans of monarchy, should be predominant in all military codes, and the no less important dogma which sanctifies the respect due to the person of kings, the stranger was too quick to see in the priest's hesitation a favorable solution of the doubts by which he seemed to be perturbed. Then, in order to give the venerable Jansenist no longer time to reflect, he said to him:

"I should blush to offer you any sort of compensation for the funeral service which you have just performed for the repose of the king's soul and for the relief of my conscience. A thing of inestimable value can be paid for only by an offering which is beyond all price. Deign, therefore, to accept, monsieur, the gift that I offer you of a blessed relic. The day will come, perhaps, when you will realize its value."

As he said this, the stranger handed the ecclesiastic a small box of light weight; the priest took it involuntarily, so to speak, for the solemnity of the man's words, the tone in which he said them, and the respect with which he handled the box, had surprised him beyond measure. They returned then to the room where the two nuns were awaiting them.

"You are," said the stranger, "in a house whose owner, Mucius Scævola, the plasterer who lives on the first floor, is famous throughout the section for his patriotism; but he is secretly attached to the Bourbons. He used to be a huntsman in the service of Monseigneur le Prince de Conti, and he owes his fortune to him. If you do not go out of his house, you are safer than in any place in France. Stay here. Devout hearts will attend to your necessities, and you may await without danger less evil times. A year hence, on the twenty-first of January (as he mentioned the date he could not restrain an involuntary gesture), if you continue to occupy this dismal apartment, I will return to celebrate again a mass of expiation."

He said no more. He bowed to the silent occupants of

the attic, cast a last glance upon the evidences of their poverty, and went away.

To the two innocent nuns, such an adventure had all the interest of a romance; and so, as soon as the venerable abbé informed them of the mysterious gift so solemnly bestowed upon him by that man, the box was placed upon the table and the three anxious faces, dimly lighted by the candle, betrayed an indescribable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the box, and found therein a handkerchief of finest linen, drenched with perspiration; and, on unfolding it, they saw stains.

"It is blood!" said the priest.

"It is marked with the royal crown!" cried the other nun.

The two sisters dropped the precious relic with a gesture of horror. To those two ingenuous souls the mystery in which the stranger was enveloped became altogether inexplicable; and as for the priest, from that day he did not even seek an explanation of it.

The three prisoners soon perceived that a powerful arm was stretched over them, in spite of the Terror.

In the first place, they received a supply of wood and provisions; then the two nuns realized that a woman must be associated with their protector, when some one sent them linen and clothing which enabled them to go out without being noticed by reason of the aristocratic cut of the garments which they had been forced to retain; and lastly, Mucius Scævola gave them two cards of citizenship. It often happened that information essential to the priest's safety reached him by devious ways; and he found this advice so opportune that it could have been given only by somebody initiated in state secrets.

Despite the famine which prevailed in Paris, the outcasts found at the door of their lodging rations of white bread, which was brought there regularly by invisible hands; they believed, however, that they could identify Mucius Scævola as the mysterious agent of this beneficence, which was always as ingenious as it was timely. The noble occupants of the attic could not doubt that their protector was the person who had come to ask the priest to celebrate the mortuary mass on the evening of the twenty-first of January, 1793; so that he became the object of a peculiar sort of wor-

ship to those three beings, who had no hope except in him, and lived only through him. They had added special prayers for him to their daily devotions; night and morning those pious souls offered up entreaties for his happiness, for his prosperity, for his salvation, and prayed to God to rescue him from all snares, to deliver him from his enemies, and to grant him a long and peaceful life. Their gratitude, being renewed every day, so to speak, was necessarily accompanied by a feeling of curiosity which became more intense from day to day. The circumstances which had attended the appearance of the stranger were the subject of their conversation; they formed innumerable conjectures about him, and the diversion which their preoccupation with him afforded them was a benefaction of a new sort. They were fully determined not to allow the stranger to evade their friendship when he should return, according to his promise, to commemorate the sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI.

That night, so impatiently awaited, came at last. At midnight they heard the sound of the stranger's heavy steps on the old, wooden staircase; the room had been arrayed to receive him, the altar was in place. This time the sisters opened the door beforehand and went forth eagerly to light the staircase. Mademoiselle de Langeais even went down a few steps in order to see her benefactor the sooner.

"Come," she said to him in a tremulous and affectionate voice, "come, we are waiting for you."

The man raised his head, cast a gloomy glance upon the nun, and made no reply. She felt as if a garment of ice had fallen upon her, and she said no more; at sight of him, gratitude and curiosity expired in all their hearts. He may have been less cold, less silent, less awe-inspiring than he appeared to those poor souls, whom the exaltation of their feeling inclined to an outpouring of friendliness. The three unhappy prisoners, understanding that he proposed to remain a stranger to them, resigned themselves to it. The priest fancied that he detected upon the stranger's lips a smile that was instantly repressed when he saw the preparations that had been made to receive him. He heard the mass and prayed; but he disappeared after responding by a few words of negative courtesy to Mademoiselle de Langeais's invitation to share the little supper they had prepared.

After the ninth of Thermidor the nuns were able to go about Paris without danger. The old priest's first errand was to a perfumer's shop, at the sign of *La Reine des Fleurs*, kept by Citizen and Citizeness Ragon, formerly perfumers to the Court, who had remained true to the royal family, and of whose services the Vendeans availed themselves to correspond with the princes and the royalist committee in Paris. The abbé, dressed according to the style of the period, was standing on the doorstep of that shop, between St. Roch and Rue des Frondeurs, when a crowd which filled Rue St. Honoré prevented him from going out.

"What is it?" he asked Madame Ragon.

"Oh! it's nothing," she replied; "just the tumbril and the executioner going to the Place Louis XV. Ah,! we saw him very often last year; but to-day, four days after the anniversary of the twenty-first of January, we can look at that horrible procession without distress."

"Why so?" said the abbé; "what you say is not Christian."

"Why, it's the execution of Robespierre's accomplices; they defended themselves as long as they could, but they're going now themselves where they have sent so many innocent people."

The crowd passed like a flood. Abbé de Marolles, yielding to an impulse of curiosity, saw over the sea of heads, standing on the tumbril, the man who, three days before, had listened to the mass.

"Who is that," he said, "that man who——"

"That is the headsman," replied Monsieur Ragon, giving the executioner his monarchical name.

"My dear, my dear," cried Madame Ragon, "monsieur l'abbé is fainting!"

And the old woman seized a vial of salts, in order to bring the old priest to himself.

"Doubtless," said the old priest, "he gave me the handkerchief with which the king wiped his brow when he went to his martyrdom! Poor man! That steel knife had a heart, when all France had none!"

The perfumers thought that the unfortunate priest was delirious.

THE VENUS OF ILLE[1]

(1837)

By PROSPER MÉRIMÉE (1803–1870)

"Mérimée, a literary artist, was not a man who used two words where one would do better, and he shines especially in those brief compositions which, like a minute intaglio, reveal at a glance his wonderful faculty of design and proportion in the treatment of his work, in which there is not a touch but counts. That is an art of which there are few examples in English; our somewhat diffuse, or slipshod, literary language hardly lending itself to the concentration of thought and expression, which are of the essence of such writing. It is otherwise in French, and if you wish to know what art of that kind can come to, read Mérimée's little romances; best of all, perhaps, 'La Vénus d'Ille' and 'Arsène Guillot.'"—Walter Pater.

Ἰλεὼς ἦν δ'ἐγὼ, ἔστω ὁ ἀνδρίας
Καὶ ἥπιος, οὕτως ἀνδρεῖος ὤν.
ΛΟΥΚΙΑΝΟΥ ΦΙΛΟΨΕΥΔΗΣ.

I was descending the last slope of Canigou, and, although the sun had already set, I could distinguish in the plain below the houses of the little town of Ille, for which I was bound.

"You know," I said to the Catalan who had been acting

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[1] Reprinted from "Little French Masterpieces," by permission of the publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

as my guide since the preceding day, "you know, doubtless, where Monsieur de Peyrehorade lives?"

"Do I know!" he cried; "why, I know his house as well as I do my own; and if it wasn't so dark, I'd show it to you. It's the finest house in Ille. He has money, you know, has Monsieur de Peyrehorade; and his son is going to marry a girl that's richer than himself."

"Is the marriage to take place soon?" I asked.

"Soon! It may be that the fiddles are already ordered for the wedding. To-night, perhaps, or to-morrow, or the day after, for all I know! It's to be at Puygarrig; for it's Mademoiselle de Puygarrig that the young gentleman is going to marry."

I had a letter of introduction to M. de Peyrehorade from my friend M. de P. He was, so my friend had told me, a very learned antiquarian, and good-natured and obliging to the last degree. He would take pleasure in showing me all the ruins within a radius of ten leagues. Now, I relied upon him to accompany me about the country near Ille, which I knew to be rich in monuments of ancient times and of the Middle Ages. This marriage, of which I now heard for the first time, might upset all my plans.

"I shall be an interloper," I said to myself.

But I was expected; as my arrival had been announced by M. de P., I must needs present myself.

"I'll bet you, monsieur," said my guide, as we reached the foot of the mountain, "I'll bet you a cigar that I can guess what you are going to do at Monsieur de Peyrehorade's."

"Why, that is not very hard to guess," I replied, offering him a cigar. "At this time of day, when one has walked six leagues over Canigou, the most urgent business is supper."

"Yes, but to-morrow? Look you, I'll bet that you have come to Ille to see the idol! I guessed that when I saw you drawing pictures of the saints at Serrabona."

"The idol! what idol?" The word had aroused my curiosity.

"What! didn't anyone at Perpignan tell you how Monsieur de Peyrehorade had found an idol in the ground?"

"You mean a terracotta, or clay statue, don't you?"

"No, indeed! I mean a copper one, and it's big enough to make a lot of big sous. It weighs as much as a church bell. It was way down in the ground, at the foot of an olive tree, that we found it."

"So you were present at the discovery, were you?"

"Yes, monsieur. Monsieur de Peyrehorade told us a fortnight ago, Jean Coll and me, to dig up an old olive tree that got frozen last year—for it was a very hard winter, you know. So, while we were at work, Jean Coll, who was going at it with all his might, dug his pick into the dirt, and I heard a *bimm*—just as if he'd struck a bell.—'What's that?' says I. We kept on digging and digging, and first a black hand showed; it looked like a dead man's hand sticking out of the ground. For my part, I was scared. I goes to monsieur, and I says to him: 'Dead men under the olive tree, master. You'd better call the curé.'

"'What dead men?' he says.

"He went with me, and he'd no sooner seen the hand than he sings out: 'An antique! an antique!' You'd have thought he had found a treasure. And to work he went with the pick and with his hands, and did as much as both of us together, you might say."

"Well, what did you find?"

"A tall black woman more than half naked, saving your presence, monsieur, of solid copper; and Monsieur de Peyrehorade told us that it was an idol of heathen times—of the time of Charlemagne!"

"I see what it is—a bronze Blessed Virgin from some dismantled convent."

"A Blessed Virgin! oh, yes! I should have recognized it if it had been a Blessed Virgin. It's an idol, I tell you; you can see that from its expression. It fastens its great white eyes on you; you'd think it was trying to stare you out of countenance. Why, you actually lower your eyes when you look at it."

"White eyes? They are incrusted on the bronze, no doubt. It may be some Roman statue."

"Roman! that's it. Monsieur de Peyrehorade says she's a Roman.—Ah! I see that you're a scholar like him."

"Is it whole, well preserved?"

"Oh! it's all there, monsieur. It's even handsomer and

finished better than the plaster-of-Paris bust of Louis Philippe at the mayor's office. But for all that, I can't get over the idol's face. It has a wicked look—and she is wicked, too."

"Wicked! what harm has she done you?"

"None to me exactly; but I'll tell you. We had got down on all fours to stand her up, and Monsieur de Peyrehorade, he was pulling on the rope, too, although he hasn't any more strength than a chicken, the excellent man! With a good deal of trouble we got her on her feet. I was picking up a piece of stone to wedge her, when, *patatras!* down she went again, all of a heap. 'Stand from under!' says I. But I was too late, for Jean Coll didn't have time to pull out his leg."

"And he was hurt?"

"His poor leg broken off short like a stick! *Pécaïre!* when I saw that, I was furious. I wanted to smash the idol with my pickax, but Monsieur de Peyrehorade held me back. He gave Jean Coll some money, but he's been in bed all the same ever since it happened, a fortnight ago, and the doctor says he'll never walk with that leg like the other. It's a pity, for he was our best runner, and next to monsieur's son, the best tennis player. I tell you, it made Monsieur Alphonse de Peyrehorade feel bad, for Coll always played with him. It was fine to see how they'd send the balls back at each other. Paf! paf! They never touched the ground."

Chatting thus we entered Ille, and I soon found myself in M. de Peyrehorade's presence. He was a little old man, still hale and active, with powdered hair, a red nose, and a jovial, bantering air. Before opening M. de P.'s letter, he installed himself in front of a bountifully spread table, and introduced me to his wife and son as an illustrious archæologist, who was destined to rescue Roussillon from the oblivion in which the indifference of scholars had thus far left it.

While eating with a hearty appetite—for nothing is more conducive thereto than the keen mountain air—I examined my hosts. I have already said a word or two of M. de Peyrehorade; I must add that he was vivacity personified. He talked, ate, rose from his chair, ran to his library, brought

books to me, showed me prints, filled my glass; he was never at rest for two minutes in succession. His wife, who was a trifle too stout, like all the Catalan women after they have passed forty, impressed me as a typical provincial, who had no interests outside of her household. Although the supper was ample for at least six persons, she ran to the kitchen, ordered pigeons killed, all sorts of things fried, and opened Heaven knows how many jars of preserves. In an instant the table was laden with dishes and bottles, and I should certainly have died of indigestion if I had even tasted everything that was offered me. And yet, with every new dish that I declined, there were renewed apologies. She was afraid that I would find myself very badly off at Ille. One had so few resources in the provinces, and Parisians were so hard to please!

Amid all the goings and comings of his parents, M. Alphonse de Peyrehorade sat as motionless as the god Terminus. He was a tall young man of twenty-six, with a handsome and regular face, which however lacked expression. His figure and his athletic proportions fully justified the reputation of an indefatigable tennis player which he enjoyed throughout the province. On this evening he was dressed in the height of fashion, exactly in accordance with the engraving in the last number of the *Journal des Modes*. But he seemed ill at ease in his clothes; he was as stiff as a picket in his velvet stock, and moved his whole body when he turned. His rough, sunburned hands and short nails formed a striking contrast to his costume. They were the hands of a plowman emerging from the sleeves of a dandy. Furthermore, although he scrutinized me with interest from head to foot, I being a Parisian, he spoke to me but once during the evening, and that was to ask me where I bought my watch-chain.

"Look you, my dear guest," said M. de Peyrehorade, as the supper drew to a close, "you belong to me, you are in my house; I shall not let you go until you have seen everything of interest that we have in our mountains. You must learn to know our Roussillon, and you must do her justice. You have no suspicion of all that we are going to show you: Phœnician, Celtic, Roman, Arabian, Byzantine monuments—you shall see them all, from the cedar to the hyssop. I will

take you everywhere, and I will not let you off from a single brick."

A paroxysm of coughing compelled him to pause. I seized the opportunity to say that I should be distressed to incommode him at a season so fraught with interest to his family. If he would simply give me the benefit of his excellent advice as to the excursions it would be well for me to make, I could easily, without putting him to the trouble of accompanying me——

"Ah! you refer to this boy's marriage," he exclaimed, interrupting me. "That's a mere trifle—it will take place day after to-morrow. You must attend the wedding with us, *en famille,* as the bride is in mourning for an aunt whose property she inherits. So there are to be no festivities, no ball. It is too bad, for you might have seen our Catalan girls dance. They are very pretty, and perhaps you would have felt inclined to follow my Alphonse's example. One marriage, they say, leads to others.—Saturday, when the young people are married, I shall be free, and we will take the field. I ask your pardon for subjecting you to the ennui of a provincial wedding. For a Parisian, sated with parties of all sorts—and a wedding without a ball, at that. However, you will see a bride—a bride—you must tell me what you think of her. But you are a serious man, and you don't look at women any more. I have something better than that to show you. I will show you something worth seeing! I have a famous surprise in store for you to-morrow."

"Mon Dieu!" said I, "it is difficult to keep a treasure in one's house without the public knowing all about it. I fancy that I can divine the surprise that you have in store for me. But if you refer to your statue, the description of it that my guide gave me has served simply to arouse my curiosity and to predispose me to admiration."

"Ah! so he spoke to you about the idol—for that is what they call my beautiful Venus Tur—but I will tell you nothing now. You shall see her to-morrow, by daylight, and tell me whether I am justified in considering her a *chef-d'œuvre. Parbleu!* you could not have arrived more opportunely! There are some inscriptions which I, poor ignoramus that I am, interpret after my manner. But a scholar from Paris! It may be that you will make fun of my inter-

pretation—for I have written a memoir—I, who speak to you, an old provincial antiquary, have made a start; I propose to make the printing presses groan. If you would kindly read and correct me, I might hope. For example, I am very curious to know how you will translate this inscription on the pedestal: CAVE—but I won't ask you anything yet. Until to-morrow! until to-morrow! Not a word about the Venus to-day!"

"You are quite right, Peyrehorade," said his wife, "to let your old idol rest. You must see that you are keeping monsieur from eating. Bah! monsieur has seen much finer statues than yours in Paris. There are dozens of them at the Tuileries, and bronze ones, too."

"There you have the ignorance, the blessed ignorance of the provinces!" interrupted M. de Peyrehorade. "Think of comparing an admirable antique to Coustou's insipid figures!

"'With what irreverence
Doth my good wife speak of the gods!'

Would you believe that my wife wanted me to melt my statue and make it into a bell for our church! She would have been the donor, you see. A *chef-d'œuvre* of Myron, monsieur!"

"*Chef-d'œuvre! chef-d'œuvre!* a pretty *chef-d'œuvre* she made! to break a man's leg!"

"Look you, my wife," said M. de Peyrehorade in a determined tone, extending his right leg encased in a stocking of Chinese silk, in her direction, "if my Venus had broken this leg, I should not regret it."

"Gracious Heaven! how can you say that, Peyrehorade? Luckily the man is getting better. Still, I can't make up my mind to look at the statue that causes such accidents as that. Poor Jean Coll!"

"Wounded by Venus, monsieur," said M. de Peyrehorade, with a chuckle, "wounded by Venus, the clown complains:

"'Veneris nec præmia noris.'

"Who has not been wounded by Venus?"

M. Alphonse, who understood French better than Latin, winked with a knowing look, and glanced at me as if to ask:

"And you, Monsieur le Parisien, do you understand?"

The supper came to an end. I had eaten nothing for the last hour. I was tired and I could not succeed in dissembling the frequent yawns which escaped me. Madame de Peyrehorade was the first to notice my plight and observed that it was time to go to bed. Thereupon began a new series of apologies for the wretched accommodations I was to have. I should not be as comfortable as I was in Paris. One is so badly off in the provinces! I must be indulgent for the Roussillonnais. In vain did I protest that after a journey in the mountains a sheaf of straw would be a luxurious bed for me—she continued to beg me to excuse unfortunate country folk if they did not treat me as well as they would have liked to do. I went upstairs at last to the room alloted to me, escorted by M. de Peyrehorade. The staircase, the upper stairs of which were of wood, ended in the center of a corridor upon which several rooms opened.

"At the right," said my host, "is the apartment which I intend to give to Madame Alphonse that is to be. Your room is at the end of the opposite corridor. You know," he added, with an expression meant to be sly, "you know we must put a newly married couple all by themselves. You are at one end of the house and they are at the other."

We entered a handsomely furnished room, in which the first object that caught my eye was a bed seven feet long, six feet wide, and so high that one had to use a stool to climb to the top. My host, having pointed out the location of the bell, having assured himself that the sugarbowl was full, and that the bottles of cologne had been duly placed on the dressing-table, and having asked me several times if I had everything that I wanted, wished me a good-night and left me alone.

The windows were closed. Before undressing I opened one of them to breathe the fresh night air, always delicious after a long supper. In front of me was Canigou, beautiful to look at always, but that evening, it seemed to me the most beautiful mountain in the world, lighted as it was by a brilliant moon. I stood for some minutes gazing at its wonderful silhouette, and was on the point of closing my window when, as I lowered my eyes, I saw the statue on a pedestal some forty yards from the house. It was placed at

the corner of a quickset hedge which separated a small garden from a large square of perfectly smooth turf, which, as I learned later, was the tennis court of the town. This tract, which belonged to M. de Peyrehorade, had been ceded by him to the commune, at his son's urgent solicitation.

I was so far from the statue that I could not distinguish its attitude and could only guess at its height, which seemed to be about six feet. At that moment two young scamps from the town walked across the tennis court, quite near the hedge, whistling the pretty Roussillon air, "Montagnes Régalades." They stopped to look at the statue, and one of them apostrophized it in a loud voice. He spoke Catalan; but I had been long enough in Roussillon to understand pretty nearly what he said.

"So there you are, hussy! (The Catalan term was much more forcible.) So there you are!" he said. "So it was you who broke Jean Coll's leg! If you belonged to me, I'd break your neck!"

"Bah! with what?" said the other. "She's made of copper, and it's so hard that Etienne broke his file trying to file it. It's copper of the heathen times, and it's harder than I don't know what."

"If I had my cold-chisel"—it seemed that he was a locksmith's apprentice—"I'd soon dig out her big white eyes, as easy as I'd take an almond out of its shell. They'd make more than a hundred sous in silver."

They walked away a few steps.

"I must bid the idol good-night," said the taller of the two, suddenly stopping again.

He stooped, and, I suppose, picked up a stone. I saw him raise his arm and throw something, and instantly there was a ringing blow on the bronze. At the same moment the apprentice put his hand to his head, with a sharp cry of pain.

"She threw it back at me!" he exclaimed.

And my two rascals fled at the top of their speed. It was evident that the stone had rebounded from the metal, and had punished the fellow for his affront to the goddess.

I closed my window, laughing heartily.

"Still another vandal chastised by Venus!" I thought.

"May all the destroyers of our ancient monuments have their heads broken thus!"

And with that charitable prayer I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I awoke. Beside my bed were, on one side, M. de Peyrehorade in his *robe-de-chambre;* on the other a servant, sent by his wife, with a cup of chocolate in his hand.

"Come, up with you, Parisian! This is just like you sluggards from the capital!" said my host, while I hastily dressed myself. "It is eight o'clock, and you are still in bed! I have been up since six. This is the third time I have come upstairs; I came to your door on tiptoe; not a sound, not a sign of life. It will injure you to sleep too much at your age. And you haven't seen my Venus yet! Come, drink this cup of Barcelona chocolate quickly. Genuine contraband, such chocolate as you don't get in Paris. You must lay up some strength, for, when you once stand in front of my Venus I shall not be able to tear you away from her."

In five minutes I was ready—that is to say, half shaved, my clothes half buttoned, and my throat scalded by the chocolate, which I had swallowed boiling hot. I went down into the garden and found myself before a really beautiful statue.

It was, in truth, a Venus, and wonderfully lovely. The upper part of the body was nude, as the ancients ordinarily represented the great divinities; the right hand, raised as high as the breast, was turned with the palm inward, the thumb and first two fingers extended, the other two slightly bent. The other hand was near the hip and held the drapery that covered the lower part of the body. The pose of the statue recalled that of the Morra Player, usually known, I know not why, by the name of Germanicus. Perhaps the sculptor intended to represent the goddess playing the game of morra.

However that may be, it is impossible to imagine anything more perfect than the body of that Venus; anything more harmonious, more voluptuous than her outlines, anything more graceful and more dignified than her drapery. I expected to see some work of the later Empire; I saw a *chef-d'œuvre* of the best period of statuary. What especially

struck me was the exquisite verisimilitude of the forms, which one might have believed to have been moulded from nature, if nature ever produced such flawless models.

The hair, which was brushed back from the forehead, seemed to have been gilded formerly. The head, which was small, like those of almost all Greek statues, was bent slightly forward. As for the face, I shall never succeed in describing its peculiar character; it was of a type which in no wise resembled that of any antique statue that I can remember. It was not the tranquil, severe beauty of the Greek sculptors, who systematically imparted a majestic immobility to all the features. Here, on the contrary, I observed with surprise a clearly marked intention on the part of the artist to express mischievousness amounting almost to deviltry. All the features were slightly contracted; the eyes were a little oblique, the corners of the mouth raised, the nostrils a little dilated. Disdain, irony, cruelty could be read upon that face, which none the less was inconceivably lovely. In truth, the more one looked at that marvelous statue, the more distressed one felt at the thought that such wonderful beauty could be conjoined to utter absence of sensibility.

"If the model ever existed," I said to M. de Peyrehorade—"and I doubt whether Heaven ever produced such a woman—how I pity her lovers! She must have delighted in driving them to death from despair. There is something downright savage in her expression, and yet I never have seen anything so beautiful!"

"'Tis Venus all intent upon her prey!" quoted M. de Peyrehorade, delighted with my enthusiasm.

That expression of infernal irony was heightened perhaps by the contrast between the very brilliant silver eyes and the coating of blackish green with which time had overlaid the whole statue. Those gleaming eyes created a certain illusion which suggested reality, life. I remembered what my guide had said, that she made those who looked at her lower their eyes. That was almost true, and I could not help feeling angry with myself as I realized that I was perceptibly ill at ease before that bronze figure.

"Now that you have admired her in every detail, my dear colleague in antiquarian research," said my host, "let us open a scientific conference, if you please. What do

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you say to this inscription which you have not noticed as yet?"

He pointed to the base of the statue, and I read there these words:

CAVE AMANTEM

"*Quid dicis, doctissime?*" ("What do you say, most learned of men?") he asked, rubbing his hands. "Let us see if we shall agree as to the meaning of this *cave amantem.*"

"Why, there are two possible meanings," I said. "It may be translated: 'Beware of him who loves you—distrust lovers.' But I am not sure that *cave amantem* would be good Latin in that sense. In view of the lady's diabolical expression, I should be inclined to believe rather that the artist meant to put the spectator on his guard against that terrible beauty. So that I should translate: 'Look out for yourself if *she* loves you.'"

"Humph!" ejaculated M. de Peyrehorade; "yes, that is a possible translation; but, with all respect, I prefer the first, which I will develop a little, however. You know who Venus's lover was?"

"She had several."

"Yes, but the first one was Vulcan. Did not the artist mean to say: 'Despite all your beauty, and your scornful air, you shall have a blacksmith, a wretched cripple, for a lover'? A solemn lesson for coquettes, monsieur!"

I could not help smiling, the interpretation seemed to me so exceedingly far-fetched.

"The Latin is a terrible language, with its extraordinary conciseness," I observed, to avoid contradicting my antiquary directly; and I stepped back a few steps to obtain a better view of the statue.

"One moment, colleague!" said M. de Peyrehorade, seizing my arm, "you have not seen all. There is still another inscription. Stand on the pedestal and look at the right arm."

As he spoke, he helped me to climb up.

I clung somewhat unceremoniously to the neck of the Venus, with whom I was beginning to feel on familiar terms. I even looked her in the eye for an instant, and I found her still more diabolical and still lovelier at close quarters. Then

I saw that there were some letters, in what I took to be the antique cursive hand, engraved on the right arm. With the aid of a strong glass I spelled out what follows, M. de Peyrehorade repeating each word as I pronounced it, and expressing his approbation with voice and gesture. I read:

VENERI TVRBVL—
EVTYCHES MYRO
IMPERIO FECIT

After the word *tvrbvl* in the first line several letters seemed to have become effaced, but *tvrbvl* was perfectly legible.

"Which means?"—queried my host, with a beaming face, and winking maliciously, for he had a shrewd idea that I would not easily handle that *tvrbvl*.

"There is one word here which I do not understand as yet," I said; "all the rest is simple. 'Eutyches made this offering to Venus by her order.'"

"Excellent. But what do you make of *tvrbvl*? What is *tvrbvl*?"

"*Tvrbvl* puzzles me a good deal. I have tried in vain to think of some known epithet of Venus to assist me. What would you say to *Turbulenta*? Venus, who disturbs, who excites—as you see, I am still engrossed by her evil expression. *Turbulenta* is not a very inapt epithet for Venus," I added modestly, for I was not very well satisfied myself with my explanation.

"Turbulent Venus! Venus the roisterer! Ah! so you think that my Venus is a wine-shop Venus, do you? Not by any means, monsieur; she is a Venus in good society. But I will explain this *tvrbvl* to you. Of course you will promise not to divulge my discovery before my memoir is printed. You see, I am very proud of this find of mine. You must leave us poor devils in the provinces a few spears to glean. You are so rich, you Parisian scholars!"

From the top of the pedestal, whereon I was still perched, I solemnly promised him that I would never be guilty of the baseness of stealing his discovery.

"*Tvrbvl*—monsieur," he said, coming nearer to me and lowering his voice, for fear that some other than myself might hear—"read *tvrbvlnerœ*."

"I don't understand any better."

"Listen. About a league from here, at the foot of the mountain, is a village called Boulternère. That name is a corruption of the Latin word *Turbulnera.* Nothing is more common than such inversions. Boulternère, monsieur, was a Roman city. I have always suspected as much, but I have never had a proof of it. Here is the proof. This Venus was the local divinity of the city of Boulternère; and this word Boulternère, whose antique origin I have just demonstrated, proves something even more interesting—namely, that Boulternère, before it became a Roman city, was a Phœnician city!"

He paused a moment to take breath and to enjoy my surprise. I succeeded in restraining a very strong inclination to laugh.

"It is a fact," he continued, "*Turbulnera* is pure Phœnician; *Tur,* pronounced *Tour—Tour* and *Sour* are the same word, are they not? *Sour* is the Phœnician name of Tyre; I do not need to remind you of its meaning. *Bul* is Baal; Bal, Bel, Bul—slight differences in pronunciation. As for *nera*—that gives me a little trouble. I am inclined to believe, failing to find a Phœnician word, that it comes from the Greek word *νηρός,* damp, swampy. In that case the word would be a hybrid. To justify my suggestion of *νηρός,* I will show you that at Boulternère the streams from the mountain form miasmatic pools. On the other hand, the termination *nera* may have been added much later, in honor of Nera Pivesuvia, wife of Tetricus, who may have had some property in the city of Turbul. But on account of the pools I prefer the etymology from *νηρός.*"

And he took a pinch of snuff with a self-satisfied air.

"But let us leave the Phœnicians and return to the inscription. I translate then: 'To Venus of Boulternère, Myron, at her command, dedicates this statue, his work.'"

I had no idea of criticising his etymology, but I did desire to exhibit some little penetration on my own part; so I said to him:

"Stop there a moment, monsieur. Myron dedicated something, but I see nothing to indicate that it was this statue."

"What!" he cried, "was not Myron a famous Greek sculptor? The talent probably was handed down in the

family; it was one of his descendants who executed this statue. Nothing can be more certain."

"But," I rejoined, "I see a little hole in the arm. I believe that it was made to fasten something to—a bracelet, perhaps, which this Myron presented to Venus as an expiatory offering.—Myron was an unsuccessful lover; Venus was irritated with him, and he appeased her by consecrating a gold bracelet to her. Observe that *fecit* is very often used in the sense of *consecravit;* they are synonymous terms. I could show you more than one example of what I say if I had Gruter or Orellius at hand. It would be quite natural for a lover to see Venus in a dream and to fancy that she ordered him to give a gold bracelet to her statue. So Myron consecrated a bracelet to her; then the barbarian, or some sacrilegious thief——"

"Ah! it is easy to see that you have written novels!" cried my host, giving me his hand to help me descend. "No, monsieur, it is a work of the school of Myron. Look at the workmanship simply and you will agree."

Having made it a rule never to contradict outright an obstinate antiquarian, I hung my head with the air of one fully persuaded, saying:

"It's an admirable thing."

"Ah! mon Dieu!" cried M. de Peyrehorade; "still another piece of vandalism! Somebody must have thrown a stone at my statue!"

He had just discovered a white mark a little above Venus's breast. I observed a similar mark across the fingers of the right hand, which I then supposed had been grazed by the stone; or else that a fragment of the stone had been broken off by the blow and had bounded against the hand. I told my host about the insult that I had witnessed, and the speedy retribution that had followed. He laughed heartily, and, comparing the apprentice to Diomedes, expressed a hope that, like the Grecian hero, he might see all his companions transformed into birds.

The breakfast bell interrupted this classical conversation, and I was again obliged, as on the preceding day, to eat for four. Then M. de Peyrehorade's farmers appeared; and while he gave audience to them, his son took me to see a calèche which he had bought at Toulouse for his fiancée, and

which I admired, it is needless to say. Then I went with him into the stable, where he kept me half an hour, boasting of his horses, giving me their genealogies, and telling me of the prizes they had won at various races in the province. At last he reached the subject of his future wife, by a natural transition from a gray mare he intended for her.

"We shall see her to-day," he said. "I do not know whether you will think her pretty; but everybody here and at Perpignan considers her charming. The best thing about her is that she's very rich. Her aunt at Prades left her all her property. Oh! I am going to be very happy."

I was intensely disgusted to see a young man more touched by the dowry than by the *beaux yeux* of his betrothed.

"You know something about jewels," continued M. Alphonse; "what do you think of this one? This is the ring that I am going to give her to-morrow."

As he spoke, he took from the first joint of his little finger a huge ring with many diamonds, made in the shape of two clasped hands; an allusion which seemed to me exceedingly poetical. The workmanship was very old, but I judged that it had been changed somewhat to allow the diamonds to be set. On the inside of the ring were these words in Gothic letters: *Sempr' ab ti;* that is to say, "Always with thee."

"It is a handsome ring," I said, "but these diamonds have taken away something of its character."

"Oh! it is much handsomer so," he replied, with a smile. "There are twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds. My mother gave it to me. It was a very old family ring—of the times of chivalry. It belonged to my grandmother, who had it from hers. God knows when it was made."

"The custom in Paris," I said, "is to give a very simple ring, usually made of two different metals, as gold and platinum, for instance. See, that other ring, which you wear on this finger, would be most suitable. This one, with its diamonds and its hands in relief, is so big that one could not wear a glove over it."

"Oh! Madame Alphonse may arrange that as she pleases. I fancy that she will be very glad to have it all the same. Twelve hundred francs on one's finger is very pleasant. This

little ring," he added, glancing fatuously at the plain one which he wore, "was given me by a woman in Paris one Mardi Gras. Ah! how I did go it when I was in Paris two years ago! That's the place where one enjoys one's self!"

And he heaved a sigh of regret.

We were to dine that day at Puygarrig with the bride's parents; we drove in the calèche to the château, about a league and a half from Ille. I was presented and made welcome as a friend of the family. I will say nothing of the dinner or of the conversation which followed it, and in which I took little part. M. Alphonse, seated beside his fiancée, said a word in her ear every quarter of an hour. As for her, she hardly raised her eyes, and whenever her future husband addressed her she blushed modestly, but replied without embarrassment.

Mademoiselle de Puygarrig was eighteen years of age; her supple and delicate figure formed a striking contrast to the bony frame of her athletic fiancé. She was not only lovely, but fascinating. I admired the perfect naturalness of all her replies; and her good-humored air, which however was not exempt from a slight tinge of mischief, reminded me, in spite of myself, of my host's Venus. As I made this comparison mentally, I asked myself whether the superiority in the matter of beauty which I could not choose but accord to the statue, did not consist in large measure in her tigress-like expression; for energy, even in evil passions, always arouses in us a certain surprise and a sort of involuntary admiration.

"What a pity," I said to myself as we left Puygarrig, "that such an attractive person should be rich, and that her dowry should cause her to be sought in marriage by a man who is unworthy of her!"

On the way back to Ille, finding some difficulty in talking with Madame de Peyrehorade, whom, however, I thought it only courteous to address now and then, I exclaimed:

"You are very strong-minded here in Roussillon! To think of having a wedding on a Friday, madame! We are more superstitious in Paris; no one would dare to take a wife on that day."

"Mon Dieu! don't mention it," said she; "if it had depended on me, they certainly would have chosen another

day. But Peyrehorade would have it so, and I had to give way to him. It distresses me, however. Suppose anything should happen? There must surely be some reason for the superstition, for why else should everyone be afraid of Friday?"

"Friday!" cried her husband; "Friday is Venus's day! A splendid day for a wedding! You see, my dear colleague, I think of nothing but my Venus. On my honor, it was on her account that I chose a Friday. To-morrow, if you are willing, before the wedding, we will offer a little sacrifice to her; we will sacrifice two pigeons, if I can find any incense."

"For shame, Peyrehorade!" his wife interposed, scandalized to the last degree. "Burn incense to an idol! That would be an abomination! What would people in the neighborhood say about you?"

"At least," said M. de Peyrehorade, "you will allow me to place a wreath of roses and lilies on her head:

"'Manibus date lilia plenis.'

The charter, you see, monsieur, is an empty word; we have no freedom of worship!"

The order of ceremonies for the following day was thus arranged: everybody was to be fully dressed and ready at precisely ten o'clock. After taking a cup of chocolate, we were to drive to Puygarrig. The civil ceremony would take place at the mayor's office of that village, and the religious ceremony in the chapel of the château. Then there would be a breakfast. After that, we were to pass the time as best we could until seven o'clock, when we were to return to Ille, to M. de Peyrehorade's, where the two families were to sup together. The rest followed as a matter of course. Being unable to dance, the plan was to eat as much as possible.

At eight o'clock I was already seated in front of the Venus, pencil in hand, beginning for the twentieth time to draw the head of the statue, whose expression I was still unable to catch. M. de Peyrehorade hovered about me, gave me advice, and repeated his Phœnician etymologies; then he arranged some Bengal roses on the pedestal of the statue, and in a tragi-comic tone addressed supplications to it for

the welfare of the couple who were to live under his roof. About nine o'clock he returned to the house to dress, and at the same time M. Alphonse appeared, encased in a tightly fitting new coat, white gloves, patent-leather shoes, and carved buttons, with a rose in his buttonhole.

"Will you paint my wife's portrait?" he asked, leaning over my drawing; "she is pretty, too."

At that moment a game of tennis began on the court I have mentioned, and it immediately attracted M. Alphonse's attention. And I myself, being rather tired, and hopeless of being able to reproduce that diabolical face, soon left my drawing to watch the players. Among them were several Spanish muleteers who had arrived in the town the night before. There were Aragonese and Navarrese, almost all wonderfully skillful at the game. So that the men of Ille, although encouraged by the presence and counsels of M. Alphonse, were speedily beaten by these new champions. The native spectators were appalled. M. Alphonse glanced at his watch. It was only half after nine. His mother's hair was not dressed. He no longer hesitated, but took off his coat, asked for a jacket, and challenged the Spaniards. I watched him, smiling at his eagerness, and a little surprised.

"I must uphold the honor of the province," he said to me.

At that moment I considerd him really handsome. He was thoroughly in earnest. His costume, which engrossed him so completely a moment before, was of no consequence. A few minutes earlier he was afraid to turn his head for fear of disarranging his cravat. Now, he paid no heed to his carefully curled locks, or to his beautifully laundered ruff. And his fiancée?—Faith, I believe that, if it had been necessary, he would have postponed the wedding. I saw him hastily put on a pair of sandals, turn back his sleeves, and with an air of confidence take his place at the head of the beaten side, like Cæsar rallying his legions at Dyrrhachium. I leaped over the hedge and found a convenient place in the shade of a plum tree, where I could see both camps.

Contrary to general expectation, M. Alphonse missed the first ball; to be sure, it skimmed along the ground, driven

with astounding force by an Aragonese who seemed to be the leader of the Spaniards.

He was a man of some forty years, thin and wiry, about six feet tall; and his olive skin was almost as dark as the bronze of the Venus.

M. Alphonse dashed his racquet to the ground in a passion.

"It was this infernal ring," he cried; "it caught my finger and made me miss a sure ball!"

He removed the diamond ring, not without difficulty, and I stepped forward to take it; but he anticipated me, ran to the Venus, slipped the ring on her third finger, and resumed his position at the head of his townsmen.

He was pale, but calm and determined. Thereafter he did not make a single mistake, and the Spaniards were completely routed. The enthusiasm of the spectators was a fine spectacle; some shouted for joy again and again, and tossed their caps in the air; others shook his hands and called him an honor to the province. If he had repelled an invasion, I doubt whether he would have received more enthusiastic and more sincere congratulations. The chagrin of the defeated party added still more to the splendor of his victory.

"We will play again, my good fellow," he said to the Aragonese in a lofty tone; "but I will give you points."

I should have been glad if M. Alphonse had been more modest, and I was almost distressed by his rival's humiliation. The Spanish giant felt the insult keenly. I saw him turn pale under his tanned skin. He glanced with a sullen expression at his racquet, and ground his teeth; then he muttered in a voice choked with rage:

"Me lo pagarás!"

M. de Peyrehorade's appearance interrupted his son's triumph. My host, greatly surprised not to find him superintending the harnessing of the new calèche, was much more surprised when he saw him drenched with perspiration, and with his racquet in his hand. M. Alphonse ran to the house, washed his face and hands, resumed his new coat and his patent-leather boots, and five minutes later we were driving rapidly toward Puygarrig. All the tennis players of the town and a great number of spectators followed us with

joyous shouts. The stout horses that drew us could hardly keep in advance of those dauntless Catalans.

We had reached Puygarrig, and the procession was about to start for the mayor's office, when M. Alphonse put his hand to his forehead and whispered to me:

"What a fool I am! I have forgotten the ring! It is on the Venus's finger, the devil take her! For Heaven's sake, don't tell my mother. Perhaps she will not notice anything."

"You might send some one to get it," I said.

"No, no! my servant stayed at Ille, and I don't trust these people here. Twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds! that might be too much of a temptation for more than one of them. Besides, what would they all think of my absent-mindedness? They would make too much fun of me. They would call me the statue's husband.—However, I trust that no one will steal it. Luckily, all my knaves are afraid of the idol. They don't dare go within arm's length of it.—Bah! it's no matter; I have another ring."

The two ceremonies, civil and religious, were performed with suitable pomp, and Mademoiselle de Puygarrig received a ring that formerly belonged to a milliner's girl at Paris, with no suspicion that her husband was bestowing upon her a pledge of love. Then we betook ourselves to the table, where we ate and drank, yes, and sang, all at great length. I sympathized with the bride amid the vulgar merriment that burst forth all about her; however, she put a better face on it than I could have hoped, and her embarrassment was neither awkwardness nor affectation. It may be that courage comes of itself with difficult situations.

The breakfast came to an end when God willed; it was four o'clock; the men went out to walk in the park, which was magnificent, or watched the peasant girls of Puygarrig, dressed in their gala costumes, dance on the lawn in front of the château. In this way, we passed several hours. Meanwhile the women were hovering eagerly about the bride, who showed them her wedding gifts. Then she changed her dress, and I observed that she had covered her lovely hair with a cap and a hat adorned with feathers; for there is nothing that wives are in such a hurry to do as to assume as soon as possible those articles of apparel which

custom forbids them to wear when they are still unmarried.

It was nearly eight o'clock when we prepared to start for Ille. But before we started there was a pathetic scene. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig's aunt, who had taken the place of a mother to her, a woman of a very advanced age and very religious, was not to go to the town with us. At our departure, she delivered a touching sermon to her niece on her duties as a wife, the result of which was a torrent of tears, and embraces without end. M. de Peyrehorade compared this separation to the abduction of the Sabine women.

We started at last, however, and on the road we all exerted ourselves to the utmost to divert the bride and make her laugh; but it was all to no purpose.

At Ille supper awaited us, and such a supper! If the vulgar hilarity of the morning had disgusted me, I was fairly sickened by the equivocal remarks and jests which were aimed at the groom, and especially at the bride. M. Alphonse, who had disappeared a moment before taking his place at the table, was as pale as death and as solemn as an iceberg. He kept drinking old Collioure wine, almost as strong as brandy. I was by his side and felt in duty bound to warn him.

"Take care! they say that this wine——"

I have no idea what foolish remark I made, to put myself in unison with the other guests.

He pressed my knee with his and said in a very low tone:

"When we leave the table, let me have a word with you."

His solemn tone surprised me. I looked at him more closely and noticed the extraordinary change in his expression.

"Are you feeling ill?" I asked him.

"No."

And he returned to his drinking.

Meanwhile, amid shouts and clapping of hands, a child of eleven years, who had slipped under the table, exhibited to the guests a dainty white and rose-colored ribbon which he had taken from the bride's ankle. They called that her garter. It was immediately cut into pieces and distributed among the young men, who decorated their buttonholes with

them, according to an ancient custom still observed in some patriarchal families. This episode caused the bride to blush to the whites of her eyes. But her confusion reached its height when M. de Peyrehorade, having called for silence, sang some Catalan verses, impromptu, so he said. Their meaning, so far as I understood it, was this:

"Pray, what is this, my friends? Does the wine I have drunk make me see double? There are two Venuses here——"

The bridegroom abruptly turned his head away with a terrified expression which made everybody laugh.

"Yes," continued M. de Peyrehorade, "there are two Venuses beneath my roof. One I found in the earth, like a truffle; the other, descended from the skies, has come to share her girdle with us."

He meant to say her garter.

"My son, choose whichever you prefer—the Roman or the Catalan Venus. The rascal chooses the Catalan, and his choice is wise. The Roman is black, the Catalan white. The Roman is cold, the Catalan inflames all who approach her."

This deliverance caused such an uproar, such noisy applause and such roars of laughter, that I thought that the ceiling would fall on our heads. There were only three sober faces at the table—those of the bride and groom, and my own. I had a terrible headache; and then, for some unknown reason, a wedding always depresses me. This one, in addition, disgusted me more or less.

The last couplets having been sung by the mayor's deputy—and they were very free, I must say—we went to the salon to make merry over the retirement of the bride, who was soon to be escorted to her chamber, for it was near midnight.

M. Alphonse led me into a window recess, and said to me, averting his eyes:

"You will laugh at me, but I don't know what the matter is with me; I am bewitched! the devil has got hold of me!"

The first idea that came to my mind was that he believed himself to be threatened by some misfortune of the sort of which Montaigne and Madame de Sévigné speak:

"The sway of love is always full of tragic episodes," etc.

"I supposed that accidents of that sort happened only to men of intellect," I said to myself.—"You have drunk too much Collioure wine, my dear Monsieur Alphonse," I said aloud. "I warned you."

"Yes, that may be. But there is something much more terrible than that."

He spoke in a halting voice. I concluded that he was downright tipsy.

"You remember my ring?" he continued, after a pause.

"Well! has it been stolen?"

"No."

"Then you have it?"

"No—I—I can't take it off that infernal Venus's finger!"

"Nonsense! you didn't pull hard enough."

"Yes, I did. But the Venus—she has bent her finger."

He looked me in the eye with a haggard expression, leaning against the window frame to avoid falling.

"What a fable!" I said. "You pushed the ring on too far. To-morrow you can recover it with a pair of pincers. But take care that you don't injure the statue."

"No, I tell you. The Venus's finger is drawn in, bent; she has closed her hand—do you understand? She is my wife, apparently, as I have given her my ring. She refuses to give it back."

I felt a sudden shiver, and for a moment I was all gooseflesh. Then, as he heaved a profound sigh, he sent a puff of alcoholic fumes into my face, and all my emotion vanished.

"The wretch is completely drunk," I thought.

"You are an antiquary, monsieur," continued the bridegroom in a piteous tone; "you know all about these statues; perhaps there is some spring, some devilish contrivance that I don't know about. Suppose you were to go out and look?"

"Willingly," I said; "come with me."

"No, I prefer that you should go alone."

I left the salon.

The weather had changed while we were at supper, and the rain was beginning to fall violently. I was about to ask for an umbrella when a sudden reflection detained me. "I should be a great fool," I said to myself, "to take any trouble to verify what an intoxicated man tells me! Perhaps, too,

he is trying to play some wretched joke on me, in order to give these worthy provincials something to laugh at; and the least that can happen to me is to be drenched to the skin and to catch a heavy cold."

I glanced from the door at the statue, which was dripping wet, and then went up to my room without returning to the salon. I went to bed, but sleep was a long while coming. All the scenes of the day passed through my mind. I thought of that lovely, pure maiden delivered to the tender mercies of a brutal sot. "What a hateful thing a *mariage de convenance* is!" I said to myself. "A mayor dons a tri-colored scarf, a curé a stole, and lo! the most virtuous girl imaginable is abandoned to the Minotaur! Two persons who do not love each other—what can they have to say at such a moment, which two true lovers would purchase at the cost of their lives? Can a woman ever love a man whom she has once seen make a beast of himself? First impressions are not easily effaced, and I am sure that this Monsieur Alphonse well deserves to be detested."

During my monologue, which I have abridged very materially, I had heard much coming and going about the house, doors opening and closing, carriages driving away; then I fancied that I heard in the hall the light footsteps of several women walking toward the farther end of the corridor opposite my room. It was probably the procession of the bride, who was being escorted to her bedroom. Then I heard the steps go downstairs again. Madame de Peyrehorade's door closed.

"How perturbed and ill at ease that poor child must be," I thought.

I turned and twisted in my bed, in an execrable humor. A bachelor plays an absurd rôle in a house where a marriage is being celebrated.

Silence had reigned for some time, when it was broken by heavy steps ascending the staircase. The wooden stairs creaked loudly.

"What a brute!" I cried. "I'll wager that he will fall on the stairs!"

Everything became quiet once more. I took up a book in order to change the current of my thoughts. It was a volume of departmental statistics, embellished by an article

from the pen of M. de Peyrehorade on the druidical remains in the arrondissement of Prades. I dozed at the third page.

I slept badly and woke several times. It might have been five o'clock, and I had been awake more than twenty minutes, when a cock crew. Day was just breaking. Suddenly I heard the same heavy steps, the same creaking of the stairs that I had heard before I fell asleep. That struck me as peculiar. I tried, yawning sleepily, to divine why M. Alphonse should rise so early. I could imagine no probable cause. I was about to close my eyes again when my attention was once more attracted by a strange tramping, to which was soon added the jangling of bells and the noise of doors violently thrown open; then I distinguished confused outcries.

"My drunkard must have set fire to something!" I thought, as I leaped out of bed.

I dressed in hot haste and went out into the corridor. From the farther end came shrieks and lamentations, and one heartrending voice rose above all the rest: "My son! my son!" It was evident that something had happened to M. Alphonse. I ran to the bridal chamber; it was full of people. The first object that caught my eye was the young man, half dressed, lying across the bed, the framework of which was broken. He was livid and absolutely motionless. His mother was weeping and shrieking by his side. M. de Peyrehorade was bustling about, rubbing his temples with eau de cologne, or holding salts to his nose. Alas! his son had been dead a long while.

On a couch, at the other end of the room, was the bride, in frightful convulsions. She was uttering incoherent cries, and two strong maidservants had all the difficulty in the world in holding her.

"Great God!" I cried, "what has happened?"

I walked to the bed and raised the unfortunate young man's body; it was already cold and stiff. His clinched teeth and livid face expressed the most horrible anguish. It seemed perfectly evident that his death had been a violent one, and the death agony indescribably terrible. But there was no sign of blood on his clothes. I opened his shirt and found on his breast a purple mark which extended around the loins and across the back. One would have said that

he had been squeezed by an iron ring. My foot came in contact with something hard on the carpet; I stooped and saw the diamond ring.

I dragged M. de Peyrehorade and his wife to their room; then I caused the bride to be taken thither.

"You still have a daughter," I said to them; "you owe to her your devoted care."

Then I left them alone.

It seemed to me to be beyond question that M. Alphonse had been the victim of a murder, the authors of which had found a way to introduce themselves into the bride's bedroom at night. The marks on the breast and their circular character puzzled me a good deal, however, for a club or an iron bar could not have produced them. Suddenly I remembered having heard that in Valencia the *bravi* used long leather bags filled with fine sand to murder people whom they were hired to kill. I instantly recalled the Aragonese muleteer and his threat; and yet I hardly dared think that he would have wreaked such a terrible vengeance for a trivial jest.

I walked about the house, looking everywhere for traces of a break, and finding nothing. I went down into the garden, to see whether the assassins might have forced their way in on that side of the house; but I found no definite indications. Indeed, the rain of the preceding night had so saturated the ground that it could not have retained any distinct impression. I observed, however, several very deep footprints; they pointed in two opposite directions, but in the same line, leading from the corner of the hedge next the tennis court to the gateway of the house. They might well be M. Alphonse's steps when he went out to take his ring from the finger of the statue. On the other hand, the hedge was less dense at that point than elsewhere, and the murderers might have passed through it there. As I went back and forth in front of the statue, I paused a moment to look at it. That time, I will confess, I was unable to contemplate without terror its expression of devilish irony; and, with my head full of the horrible scenes I had witnessed, I fancied that I had before me an infernal divinity, exulting over the disaster that had stricken that house.

I returned to my room and remained there till noon.

Then I went out and inquired concerning my hosts. They were a little calmer. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig—I should say M. Alphonse's widow—had recovered her senses. She had even talked with the king's attorney from Perpignan, then on circuit at Ille, and that magistrate had taken her deposition. He desired mine also. I told him what I knew and made no secret of my suspicions of the Aragonese muleteer. He ordered that he should be arrested immediately.

"Did you learn anything from Madame Alphonse?" I asked the king's attorney, when my deposition was written out and signed.

"That unfortunate young woman has gone mad," he replied, with a sad smile. "Mad! absolutely mad! This is what she told me:

"She had been in bed, she said, a few minutes, with the curtains drawn, when her bedroom door opened and some one came in. At that time Madame Alphonse was on the inside of the bed, with her face toward the wall. Supposing, of course, that it was her husband, she did not move. A moment later, the bed creaked as if under an enormous weight. She was terribly frightened, but dared not turn her head. Five minutes, ten minutes perhaps—she can only guess at the time—passed in this way. Then she made an involuntary movement, or else the other person in the bed made one, and she felt the touch of something as cold as ice—that was her expression. She moved closer to the wall, trembling in every limb. Shortly after, the door opened a second time, and some one came in, who said: 'Good evening, my little wife.' Soon the curtains were drawn aside. She heard a stifled cry. The person who was in the bed by her side sat up and seemed to put out its arms. Thereupon she turned her head, and saw, so she declares, her husband on his knees beside the bed, with his head on a level with the pillow, clasped in the arms of a sort of greenish giant, who was squeezing him with terrible force. She says —and she repeated it twenty times, poor woman!—she says that she recognized—can you guess whom?—the bronze Venus, M. de Peyrehorade's statue. Since she was unearthed, the whole neighborhood dreams of her. But I continue the story of that unhappy mad woman. At that sight she lost consciousness, and it is probable that she had

lost her reason some moments before. She could give me no idea at all how long she remained in her swoon. Recovering her senses, she saw the phantom, or, as she still insists, the statue, motionless, with its legs and the lower part of the body in the bed, the bust and arms stretched out, and in its arms her husband, also motionless. A cock crew. Thereupon the statue got out of bed, dropped the dead body, and left the room. Madame Alphonse rushed for the bell-cord, and you know the rest."

The Spaniard was arrested; he was calm, and defended himself with much self-possession and presence of mind. He did not deny making the remark I had overheard; but he explained it by saying that he had meant simply this: that, on the following day, having rested meanwhile, he would beat his victorious rival at tennis. I remember that he added:

"An Aragonese, when he is insulted, doesn't wait until the next day for his revenge. If I had thought that Monsieur Alphonse intended to insult me, I would have driven my knife into his belly on the spot."

His shoes were compared with the footprints in the garden, and were found to be much larger.

Lastly, the innkeeper at whose house he was staying deposed that he had passed the whole night rubbing and doctoring one of his mules, which was sick. Furthermore, the Aragonese was a man of excellent reputation, well known in the province, where he came every year in the course of his business. So he was released with apologies.

I have forgotten the deposition of a servant, who was the last person to see M. Alphonse alive. It was just as he was going up to his wife; he called the man and asked him with evident anxiety if he knew where I was. The servant replied that he had not seen me. Thereupon M. Alphonse sighed and stood more than a minute without speaking; then he said:

"Well! the devil must have taken him away, too!"

I asked him if M. Alphonse had his diamond ring on his finger when he spoke to him. The servant hesitated before he replied; at least he said that he did not think so, but that he had not noticed particularly.

"If he had had that ring on his finger," he added upon

reflection, "I should certainly have noticed it, for I thought that he had given it to Madame Alphonse."

As I questioned this man, I was conscious of a touch of the superstitious terror with which Madame Alphonse's deposition had infected the whole household. The king's attorney glanced at me with a smile, and I did not persist.

Some hours after M. Alphonse's funeral, I prepared to leave Ille. M. de Peyrehorade's carriage was to take me to Perpignan. Despite his enfeebled condition, the poor old man insisted upon attending me to his garden gate. We passed through the garden in silence; he, hardly able to drag himself alone, leaning on my arm. As we were about to part, I cast a last glance at the Venus. I foresaw that my host, although he did not share the terror and detestation which she inspired in a portion of his family, would be glad to be rid of an object which would constantly remind him of a shocking calamity. It was my purpose to urge him to place it in some museum. I hesitated about opening the subject, when M. de Peyrehorade mechanically turned his head in the direction in which he saw that I was gazing earnestly. His eye fell upon the statue, and he instantly burst into tears. I embraced him, and, afraid to say a single word, entered the carriage.

I never learned, subsequent to my departure, that any new light had been thrown upon that mysterious catastrophe.

M. de Peyrehorade died a few months after his son. By his will he bequeathed to me his manuscripts, which I shall publish some day, perhaps. I found among them no memoir relating to the inscriptions on the Venus.

P. S.—My friend M. de P. has recently written me from Perpignan that the statue no longer exists. After her husband's death, Madame de Peyrehorade's first care was to have it melted into a bell, and in that new shape it is now used in the church at Ille.

"But," M. de P. adds, "it would seem that an evil fate pursues all those who possess that bronze. Since that bell has rung at Ille the vines have frozen twice."

THE PURLOINED LETTER[1]

(1845)

By EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809–1849)

"Nothing is more clear than that every plot worth the name must be elaborated to its *dénoucment* before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention."

"I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself in the first place: 'Of the innumerable effects or impressions of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?'"—"Philosophy of Composition," E. A. Poe.

"Nil sapientiæ odiosius acumine nimio."

SENECA.

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend,

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C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book closet, *au troisième,* No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. For an hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G——'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he forbore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled toward him a comfortable chair.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?"

"Oh, no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd.*"

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we

have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you *do* talk!" replied the prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good Heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little *too* self-evident."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ho! ho! ho!" roared our visitor, profoundly amused. "O Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what after all *is* the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold were it known that I confide it to anyone."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information from a very high quarter that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing *out* of the robber's possession; that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it."

"Be a little more explicit," I said.

"Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

"Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

"No? well; the disclosure of the document to a third

person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized."

"But this ascendancy," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare——"

"The thief," said G——, "is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage, from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus exposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses for some fifteen minutes upon the public affairs. At length in taking leave he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but of course dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage, who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped, leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of

reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G——; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minister's hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"Oh, yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present pe-

culiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

That is to say, of being *destroyed,*" said Dupin.

True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself the trouble," said Dupin. "D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings as a matter of course."

"Not *altogether* a fool," said G——; "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why, the fact is, we took our time, and we searched *everywhere.* I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room, devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is *so* plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly ar-

ranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bed-posts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case we were obliged to proceed without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed in a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs!"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the gluing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bedclothes, as well as the curtains and carpets?"

"That, of course; and when we had absolutely completed every article of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

"You include the *grounds* about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with bricks. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly: we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-*cover,* with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* on the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G——. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh, yes." And here the prefect, producing a memorandum book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterward he paid us another visit, and

found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair, and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said:

"Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the reëxamination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward—I don't like to say how much precisely; but one thing I *will* say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to anyone who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might —do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How, in what way?"

"Why (puff, puff), you might (puff, puff) employ counsel in the matter, eh (puff, puff, puff)? Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

"'We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would *you* have directed him to take?'

"'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take *advice,* to be sure.'"

"But," said the prefect, a little discomposed, "I am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would

really give fifty thousand francs to anyone who would aid me in the matter."

"In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a check-book, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

I was astounded. The prefect appeared absolutely thunderstricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocketbook; then, unlocking an *escritoire,* took thence a letter and gave it to the prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— retailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

"So far as his labors extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A cer-

tain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand asks, 'Are they even or odd?' Our schoolboy replies, 'Odd,' and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'The simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd'; he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first he would have reasoned thus: 'This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and in the second he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even'; he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom his fellows term 'lucky'—what, in its last analysis, is it?"

"It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

"It is," said Dupin; "and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is anyone, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in

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my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucauld, to La Bruyère, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponents, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin, "and the prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass;* but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency, by some extraordinary reward, they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice,* without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration *of the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair leg—but, at least, in *some* out of the way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair leg? And do you not see, also, that such *recherchés* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordi-

nary occasions and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects? for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the prefect, its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the minister is a fool because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the prefect *feels;* and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

"But is this really the poet?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The minister, I believe, has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician and no poet."

"You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician he would reason well; as mere mathematician he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the prefect."

"You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason *par excellence.*"

"'*Il y a à parier,*'" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "'*que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre.*' The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have in-

sinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this practical deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra,' about as much as, in Latin, '*ambitio*' implies 'ambition,' '*religio*,' 'religion,' or '*homines honesti*,' a set of *honorable* men."

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value of that reason which is cultivated in any special form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *untrue* that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry, also, the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolute general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned 'Mythology,' mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that 'although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.' With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the 'Pagan fables' *are* believed and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that $x^2 + px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal

to *q*. Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where $x^2 + px$ is *not* altogether equal to *q*, and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

"I mean to say," continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, "that if the minister had been no more than a mathematician the prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as courtier, too, and as a bold *intriguant*. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident."

"Yes," said I. "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiæ,* for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs over the shop doors are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state, or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

"But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D——; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand,* if he intended to

use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

"Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the ministerial hotel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

"To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

"I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling, by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D—— cipher very conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D——, the minister himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which

the prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D—— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S—— family. Here, the address, to the minister, was diminutive and feminine; there, the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt, the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D——, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyper-obtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

"I protracted my visit as long as possible, and while I maintained a most animated discussion with the minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon the discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed. I bade the minister good morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

"The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw

it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a *facsimile* (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher very readily by means of a seal formed of bread.

"The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay."

"But what purpose had you," I asked, "in replacing the letter by a *facsimile?* Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly and departed?"

"D——," replied Dupin, "is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interest. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself at once to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni;* but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum,* an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the prefect terms 'a certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

"How? Did you put anything particular in it?"

"Why, it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clew. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words:

'—— Un dessein si funeste,
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.'

They are to be found in Crébillon's 'Atrée.'"

RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER [1]

By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804–1864)

(From "Mosses from an Old Manse," 1846)

"A person to be in possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand; he tries to make it perfect and ruins it entirely."—*American Notes,* p. 103.

"'A story there passeth of an Indian king that sent unto Alexander a fair woman, fed with aconite and other poisons, with this intent, complexionally, to destroy him.'"—Quoted from Sir T. Brown, *American Notes,* p. 213.

"A person to spend all his life and splendid talents in trying to achieve something naturally impossible—as to make a conquest over nature."—*American Notes,* p. 214.

A YOUNG man, named Giovanni Guasconti, came, very long ago, from the more southern region of Italy, to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice, which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family,

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and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his Inferno. These reminiscences and associations, together with the tendency to heart-break natural to a young man for the first time out of his native sphere, caused Giovanni to sigh heavily, as he looked around the desolate and ill-furnished apartment.

"Holy Virgin, signor," cried old dame Lisabetta, who won by the youth's remarkable beauty of person, was kindly endeavoring to give the chamber a habitable air, "what a sigh was that to come out of a young man's heart! Do you find this old mansion gloomy? For the love of Heaven, then, put your head out of the window, and you will see as bright sunshine as you have left in Naples."

Guasconti mechanically did as the old woman advised, but could not quite agree with her that the Lombard sunshine was as cheerful as that of southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window, and expended its fostering influences on a variety of plants, which seemed to have been cultivated with exceeding care.

"Does this garden belong to the house?" asked Giovanni.

"Heaven forbid, signor!—unless it were fruitful of better pot-herbs than any that grow there now," answered old Lisabetta. "No: that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous doctor, who, I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said that he distills these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm. Oftentimes you may see the signor doctor at work, and perchance the signora his daughter, too, gathering the strange flowers that grow in the garden."

The old woman had now done what she could for the aspect of the chamber, and, commending the young man to the protection of the saints, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance, he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens, which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy, or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure place of an opulent family; for there was the ruin of a marble fountain in the center, sculptured with rare

art, but so woefully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos of remaining fragments. The water, however, continued to gush and sparkle into the sunbeams as cheerfully as ever. A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man's window, and made him feel as if a fountain were an immortal spirit, that sung its song unceasingly, and without heeding the vicissitudes around it; while one century embodied it in marble, and another scattered the perishable garniture on the soil. All about the pool into which the water subsided, grew various plants, that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and, in some instances, flowers gorgeously magnificent. There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care; as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fostered them. Some were placed in urns, rich with old carving, and others in common garden-pots; some crept serpentlike along the ground, or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. One plant had wreathed itself round a statue of Vertumnus, which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage, so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study.

While Giovanni stood at the window, he heard a rustling behind a screen of leaves, and became aware that a person was at work in the garden. His figure soon emerged into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer, but a tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his

path; it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape, and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume. Nevertheless, in spite of the deep intelligence on his part, there was no approach to intimacy between himself and these vegetable existences. On the contrary, he avoided their actual touch, or the direct inhaling of their odors, with a caution that impressed Giovanni most disagreeably; for the man's demeanor was that of one walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts, or deadly snakes, or evil spirits, which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him some terrible fatality. It was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination, to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world?—and this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow, was he the Adam?

The distrustful gardener, while plucking away the dead leaves or pruning the too luxuriant growth of the shrubs, defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were these his only armor. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple gems beside the marble fountain, he placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a deadlier malice. But finding his task still too dangerous, he drew back, removed the mask, and called loudly, but in the infirm voice of a person affected with inward disease:

"Beatrice!—Beatrice!"

"Here am I, my father! What would you?" cried a rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house; a voice as rich as a tropical sunset, and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson, and of perfumes heavily delectable—"Are you in the garden?"

"Yes, Beatrice," answered the gardener, "and I need your help."

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely, in their luxuriance, by her virgin zone. Yet Giovanni's fancy must have grown morbid, while he looked down into the garden; for the impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if here were another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones, as beautiful as they—more beautiful than the richest of them—but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. As Beatrice came down the garden-path, it was observable that she handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants, which her father had most sedulously avoided.

"Here, Beatrice," said the latter, "see how many needful offices require to be done to our chief treasure. Yet, shattered as I am, my life might pay the penalty of approaching it so closely as circumstances demand. Henceforth, I fear, this plant must be consigned to your sole charge."

"And gladly will I undertake it," cried again the rich tones of the young lady, as she bent toward the magnificent plant, and opened her arms as if to embrace it. "Yes, my sister, my splendor, it shall be Beatrice's task to nurse and serve thee; and thou shalt reward her with thy kisses and perfume breath, which to her is as the breath of life!"

Then, with all the tenderness in her manner that was so strikingly expressed in her words, she busied herself with such attentions as the plant seemed to require; and Giovanni, at his lofty window, rubbed his eyes, and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower, or one sister performing the duties of affection to another. The scene soon terminated. Whether Dr. Rappaccini had finished his labors in the garden, or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger's face, he now took his daughter's arm and retired. Night was already closing in; oppressive exhalations seemed to proceed from the plants, and steal upward past the open window; and Giovanni, closing the

lattice, went to his couch, and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni's first movement, on starting from sleep, was to throw open the window, and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised, and a little ashamed, to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun, which gilded the dew drops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. The young man rejoiced that, in the heart of the barren city, he had the privilege of overlooking this spot of lovely and luxuriant vegetation. It would serve, he said to himself, as a symbolic language, to keep him in communion with nature. Neither the sickly and thought-worn Dr. Giacomo Rappaccini, it is true, nor his brilliant daughter, were now visible, so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both was due to their own qualities, and how much to his wonder-working fancy. But he was inclined to take a most rational view of the whole matter.

In the course of the day, he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, professor of medicine in the University, a physician of eminent repute, to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The professor was an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature, and habits that might almost be called jovial; he kept the young man to dinner, and made himself very agreeable by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a flask or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, conceiving that men of science, inhabitants of the same city, must needs be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Dr. Rappaccini. But the professor did not respond with so much cordiality as he had anticipated.

"Ill would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine," said Prof. Pietro Baglioni, in answer to a question of Giovanni, "to withhold due and well-considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini. But, on the other hand, I should answer it but scantily to my conscience, were I to permit a worthy youth like yourself, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to imbibe erroneous ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Dr. Rappaccini has as much science as any member of the faculty—with perhaps one single exception—in Padua, or all Italy. But there are certain grave objections to his professional character."

"And what are they?" asked the young man.

"Has my friend Giovanni any disease of body or heart, that he is so inquisitive about physicians?" said the Professor, with a smile. "But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard-seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge."

"Methinks he is an awful man, indeed," remarked Guasconti, mentally recalling the cold and purely intellectual aspect of Rappaccini. "And yet, worshipful Professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men capable of so spiritual a love of science?"

"God forbid," answered the professor, somewhat testily —"at least, unless they take sounder views of the healing art than those adopted by Rappaccini. It is his theory, that all medicinal virtues are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons. These he cultivates with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new varieties of poison, more horribly deleterious than Nature, without the assistance of this learned person, would ever have plagued the world with. That the signor Doctor does less mischief than might be expected, with such dangerous substances, is undeniable. Now and then, it must be

owned, he has effected—or seemed to effect—a marvelous cure. But to tell you my private mind, Signor Giovanni, he should receive little credit for such instances of success —they being probably the work of chance—but should be held strictly accountable for his failures, which may justly be considered his own work."

The youth might have taken Baglioni's opinions with many grains of allowance, had he known that there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Dr. Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua.

"I know not, most learned Professor," returned Giovanni, after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini's exclusive zeal for science, "I know not how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter."

"Ah!" cried the Professor with a laugh. "So now our friend Giovanni's secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though not half a dozen have ever had the good hap to see her face. I know little of the Signora Beatrice, save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that, young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor's chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine! Other absurd rumors there be, not worth talking about or listening to. So now, Signor Giovanni, drink off your glass of Lacryma."

Guasconti returned to his lodgings somewhat heated with the wine he had quaffed, and which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Dr. Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a florist's, he bought a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Ascending to his chamber, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the depth of the wall, so that he could look down into the garden with little risk of being discovered. All beneath his eye was a solitude. The strange plants were basking in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another, as if in acknowl-

edgment of sympathy and kindred. In the midst, by the shattered fountain, grew the magnificent shrub, with its purple gems clustering all over it; they glowed in the air, and gleamed back again out of the depths of the pool, which thus seemed to overflow with colored radiance from the rich reflection that was steeped in it. At first, as we have said, the garden was a solitude. Soon, however—as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared, would be the case—a figure appeared beneath the antique sculptured portal, and came down between the rows of plants, inhaling their various perfumes, as if she were one of those beings of old classic fable, that lived upon sweet odors. On again beholding Beatrice, the young man was even startled to perceive how much her beauty exceeded his recollection of it; so brilliant, so vivid in its character, that she glowed amid the sunlight, and, as Giovanni whispered to himself, positively illuminated the more shadowy intervals of the garden path. Her face being now more revealed than on the former occasion, he was struck by its expression of simplicity and sweetness; qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character, and which made him ask anew, what manner of mortal she might be. Nor did he fail again to observe, or imagine, an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gemlike flowers over the fountain; a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues.

Approaching the shrub, she threw open her arms, as with a passionate ardor, and drew its branches into an intimate embrace; so intimate, that her features were hidden in its leafy bosom, and her glistening ringlets all intermingled with the flowers.

"Give me thy breath, my sister," exclaimed Beatrice; "for I am faint with common air! And give me this flower of thine, which I separate with gentlest fingers from the stem, and place it close beside my heart."

With these words, the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini plucked one of the richest blossoms of the shrub, and was about to fasten it in her bosom. But now, unless Giovanni's draughts of wine had bewildered his senses, a sin-

gular incident occurred. A small orange-colored reptile, of the lizard or chameleon species, chanced to be creeping along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni—but, at the distance from which he gazed, he could scarcely have seen anything so minute—it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant, the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom. There it blushed, and almost glimmered with the dazzling effect of a precious stone, adding to her dress and aspect the one appropriate charm, which nothing else in the world could have supplied. But Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled.

"Am I awake? Have I my senses?" said he to himself. "What is this being?—beautiful, shall I call her?—or inexpressibly terrible?"

Beatrice now strayed carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni's window, so that he was compelled to thrust his head quite out of its concealment, in order to gratify the intense and painful curiosity which she excited. At this moment, there came a beautiful insect over the garden wall; it had perhaps wandered through the city and found no flowers nor verdure among those antique haunts of men, until the heavy perfumes of Dr. Rappaccini's shrubs had lured it from afar. Without alighting on the flowers, this winged brightness seemed to be attracted by Beatrice, and lingered in the air and fluttered about her head. Now here it could not be but that Giovanni Guasconti's eyes deceived him. Be that as it might, he fancied that while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight, it grew faint and fell at her feet!—its bright wings shivered! it was dead!—from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself and sighed heavily, as she bent over the dead insect.

An impulsive movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the

young man—rather a Grecian than an Italian head, with fair, regular features, and a glistening of gold among his ringlets—gazing down upon her like a being that hovered in midair. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the bouquet which he had hitherto held in his hand.

"Signora," said he, "there are pure and healthful flowers. Wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti!"

"Thanks, Signor," replied Beatrice, with her rich voice that came forth as it were like a gush of music; and with a mirthful expression half childish and half womanlike. "I accept your gift, and would fain recompense it with this precious purple flower; but if I toss it into the air, it will not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must even content himself with my thanks."

She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then as if inwardly ashamed at having stepped aside from her maidenly reserve to respond to a stranger's greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But, few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought; there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one, at so great a distance.

For many days after this incident, the young man avoided the window that looked into Dr. Rappaccini's garden, as if something ugly and monstrous would have blasted his eyesight had he been betrayed into a glance. He felt conscious of having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power by the communication which he had opened with Beatrice. The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, to quit his lodgings and Padua itself, at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself, as far as possible, to the familiar and daylight view of Beatrice; thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience. Least of all, while avoiding her sight, should Giovanni have remained so near this extraordinary being, that the proximity and possibility even of intercourse should give a kind of substance and reality to the wild vagaries which his imagination ran riot continually in producing. Guasconti

had not a deep heart—or at all events, its depths were not sounded now—but he had a quick fancy, and an ardent southern temperament, which rose every instant to a higher fever pitch. Whether or no Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes—that fatal breath—the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers—which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.

Sometimes he endeavored to assuage the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua, or beyond its gates; his footsteps kept time with the throbbings of his brain, so that the walk was apt to accelerate itself to a race. One day, he found himself arrested; his arm was seized by a portly personage who had turned back on recognizing the young man, and expended much breath in overtaking him.

"Signor Giovanni!—stay, my young friend!" cried he. "Have you forgotten me? That might well be the case, if I were as much altered as yourself."

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided, ever since their first meeting, from a doubt that the professor's sagacity would look too deeply into his secrets. Endeavoring to recover himself, he stared forth wildly from his inner world into the outer one, and spoke like a man in a dream.

"Yes; I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Prof. Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass!"

"Not yet—not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti," said the Professor, smiling, but at the same time scrutinizing the youth with an earnest glance. "What; did I grow up side

by side with your father, and shall his son pass me like a stranger, in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni; for we must have a word or two before we part."

"Speedily, then, most worshipful Professor, speedily!" said Giovanni, with feverish impatience. "Does not your worship see that I am in haste?"

Now, while he was speaking, there came a man in black along the street, stooping and moving feebly, like a person in inferior health. His face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect, that an observer might easily have overlooked the merely physical attributes, and have seen only this wonderful energy. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant salutation with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni with an intentness that seemed to bring out whatever was within him worthy of notice. Nevertheless, there was a peculiar quietness in the look, as if taking merely a speculative, not a human, interest in the young man.

"It is Dr. Rappaccini!" whispered the Professor, when the stranger had passed. "Has he ever seen your face before?"

"Not that I know," answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

"He *has* seen you!—he must have seen you!" said Baglioni, hastily. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! It is the same that coldly illuminates his face, as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment, he has killed by the perfume of a flower; a look as deep as nature itself, but without nature's warmth of love. Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiments!"

"Will you make a fool of me?" cried Giovanni, passionately. "*That*, Signor Professor, were an untoward experiment."

"Patience, patience!" replied the imperturbable Professor. "I tell thee, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in thee. Thou hast fallen into fearful hands! And the Signora Beatrice? What part does she act in this mystery?"

But Guasconti, finding Baglioni's pertinacity intolerable, here broke away, and was gone before the Professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man intently, and shook his head.

"This must not be," said Baglioni to himself. "The youth is the son of my old friend, and shall not come to any harm from which the arcana of medical science can preserve him. Besides, it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to. Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!"

Meanwhile, Giovanni had pursued a circuitous route, and at length found himself at the door of his lodgings. As he crossed the threshold, he was met by old Lisabetta, who smirked and smiled, and was evidently desirous to attract his attention; vainly, however, as the ebullition of his feelings had momentarily subsided into a cold and dull vacuity. He turned his eyes full upon the withered face that was puckering itself into a smile, but seemed to behold it not. The old dame, therefore, laid her grasp upon his cloak.

"Signor!—Signor!" whispered she, still with a smile over the whole breadth of her visage, so that it looked not unlike a grotesque carving in wood, darkened by centuries—"Listen, signor! There is a private entrance into the garden!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about, as if an inanimate thing should start into feverish life. "A private entrance into Dr. Rappaccini's garden!"

"Hush! hush!—not so loud!" whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth. "Yes; into the worshipful doctor's garden, where you may see all his fine shrubbery. Many a young man in Padua would give gold to be admitted among those flowers."

Giovanni put a piece of gold into her hand.

"Show me the way," said he.

A surmise, probably excited by his conversation with Baglioni, crossed his mind, that this interposition of old Lisabetta might perchance be connected with the intrigue, whatever were its nature, in which the professor seemed

to suppose that Dr. Rappaccini was involving him. But such a suspicion, though it disturbed Giovanni, was inadequate to restrain him. The instant he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed an absolute necessity of his existence to do so. It mattered not whether she were angel or demon; he was irrevocably within her sphere, and must obey the law that whirled him onward, in ever lessening circles, toward a result which he did not attempt to foreshadow. And yet, strange to say, there came across him a sudden doubt, whether this intense interest on his part were not delusory—whether it were really of so deep and positive a nature as to justify him in now thrusting himself into an incalculable position—whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain, only slightly, or not at all, connected with his heart!

He paused — hesitated — turned half about — but again went on. His withered guide led him along several obscure passages, and finally undid a door, through which, as it was opened, there came the sight and sound of rustling leaves, with the broken sunshine glimmering among them. Giovanni stepped forth, and forcing himself through the entanglement of a shrub that wreathed its tendrils over the hidden entrance, he stood beneath his own window, in the open area of Dr. Rappaccini's garden.

How often is it the case, that, when impossibilities have come to pass, and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm, and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus. Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind, when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance. So was it now with Giovanni. Day after day, his pulses had throbbed with feverish blood, at the improbable idea of an interview with Beatrice, and of standing with her, face to face, in this very garden, basking in the Oriental sunshine of her beauty, and snatching from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed the riddle of his own existence. But now there was a singular and untimely equanimity within his breast. He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her

father were present, and perceiving that he was alone, began a critical observation of the plants.

The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him; their gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural. There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer, straying by himself through a forest, would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket. Several, also, would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness, indicating that there had been such commixture, and, as it were, adultery, of various vegetable species, that the production was no longer of God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty. They were probably the result of experiment, which, in one or two cases, had succeeded in mingling plants individually lovely into a compound possessing the questionable and ominous character that distinguished the whole growth of the garden. In fine, Giovanni recognized but two or three plants in the collection, and those of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these contemplations, he heard the rustling of a silken garment, and turning, beheld Beatrice emerging from beneath the sculptured portal.

Giovanni had not considered with himself what should be his deportment; whether he should apologize for his intrusion into the garden, or assume that he was there with the privity, at least, if not by the desire, of Dr. Rappaccini or his daughter. But Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease, though leaving him still in doubt by what agency he had gained admittance. She came lightly along the path, and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure.

"You are a connoisseur in flowers, signor," said Beatrice with a smile, alluding to the bouquet which he had flung her from the window. "It is no marvel, therefore, if the sight of my father's rare collection has tempted you to take a nearer view. If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these shrubs, for he has spent a lifetime in such studies, and this garden is his world."

"And yourself, lady," observed Giovanni, "if fame says true—you, likewise, are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms, and these spicy perfumes. Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than under Signor Rappaccini himself."

"Are there such idle rumors?" asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh. "Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No; though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their hues and perfume; and sometimes, methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here, and those not the least brilliant, that shock and offend me, when they meet my eye. But, pray, signor, do not believe these stories about my science. Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes."

"And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?" asked Giovanni pointedly, while the recollection of former scenes made him shrink. "No, Signora, you demand too little of me. Bid me believe nothing, save what comes from your own lips."

It would appear that Beatrice understood him. There came a deep flush to her cheek; but she looked full into Giovanni's eyes, and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queenlike haughtiness.

"I do so bid you, Signor!" she replied. "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the heart outward. Those you may believe!"

A fervor glowed in her whole aspect, and beamed upon Giovanni's consciousness like the light of truth itself. But while she spoke, there was a fragrance in the atmosphere around her rich and delightful, though evanescent, yet which the young man, from an indefinable reluctance, scarcely dared to draw into his lungs. It might be the odor of the flowers. Could it be Beatrice's breath, which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart? A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni, and flitted away; he seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl's eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear.

The tinge of passion that had colored Beatrice's manner vanished: she became gay, and appeared to derive a pure delight from her communion with the youth, not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt, conversing with a voyager from the civilized world. Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight or summer clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city, or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters; questions indicating such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms, that Giovanni responded as if to an infant. Her spirit gushed out before him like a fresh rill, that was just catching its first glimpse of the sunlight, and wondering at the reflections of earth and sky which were flung into its bosom.

There came thoughts, too, from a deep source, and fantasies of a gemlike brilliancy, as if diamonds and rubies sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain. Ever and anon, there gleamed across the young man's mind a sense of wonder, that he should be walking side by side with the being who had so wrought upon his imagination—whom he had idealized in such hues of terror—in whom he had positively witnessed such manifestations of dreadful attributes—that he should be conversing with Beatrice like a brother, and should find her so human and so maidenlike. But such reflections were only momentary; the effect of her character was too real, not to make itself familiar at once.

In this free intercourse, they had strayed through the garden, and now, after many turns among its avenues, were come to the shattered fountain, beside which grew the magnificent shrub with its treasury of glowing blossoms. A fragrance was diffused from it, which Giovanni recognized as identical with that which he had attributed to Beatrice's breath, but incomparably more powerful. As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her bosom, as if her heart were throbbing suddenly and painfully.

"For the first time in my life," murmured she, addressing the shrub, "I had forgotten thee!"

"I remember, Signora," said Giovanni, "that you once promised to reward me with one of these living gems for the bouquet which I had the happy boldness to fling to your

feet. Permit me now to pluck it as a memorial of this interview."

He made a step toward the shrub, with extended hand. But Beatrice darted forward, uttering a shriek that went through his heart like a dagger. She caught his hand, and drew it back with the whole force of her slender figure. Giovanni felt her touch thrilling through his fibers.

"Touch it not!" exclaimed she, in a voice of agony. "Not for thy life! It is fatal!"

Then, hiding her face, she fled from him, and vanished beneath the sculptured portal. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes, he beheld the emaciated figure and pale intelligence of Dr. Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his chamber, than the image of Beatrice came back to his passionate musings, invested with all the witchery that had been gathering around it ever since his first glimpse of her, and now likewise imbued with a tender warmth of girlish womanhood. She was human: her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love. Those tokens, which he had hitherto considered as proofs of a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system, were now either forgotten, or, by the subtle sophistry of passion, transmuted into a golden crown of enchantment, rendering Beatrice the more admirable, by so much as she was the more unique. Whatever had looked ugly, was now beautiful: or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half ideas, which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness. Thus did Giovanni spend the night, nor fell asleep, until the dawn had begun to awake the slumbering flowers in Dr. Rappaccini's garden, whither his dreams doubtless led him. Up rose the sun in his due season, and flinging his beams upon the young man's eyelids, awoke him to a sense of pain. When thoroughly aroused, he became sensible of a burning and tingling agony in his hand—in his right hand—the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own, when he was on the point of

plucking one of the gemlike flowers. On the back of that hand there was now a purple print, like that of four small fingers, and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist.

Oh, how stubbornly does love—or even that cunning semblance of love which flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart—how stubbornly does it hold its faith, until the moment come, when it is doomed to vanish into thin mist! Giovanni wrapt a handkerchief about his hand, and wondered what evil thing had stung him, and soon forgot his pain in a reverie of Beatrice.

After the first interview, a second was in the inevitable course of what we call fate. A third; a fourth; and a meeting with Beatrice in the garden was no longer an incident in Giovanni's daily life, but the whole space in which he might be said to live; for the anticipation and memory of that ecstatic hour made up the remainder. Nor was it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth's appearance, and flew to his side with confidence as unreserved as if they had been playmates from early infancy —as if they were such playmates still. If, by any unwonted chance, he failed to come at the appointed moment, she stood beneath the window, and sent up the rich sweetness of her tones to float around him in his chamber, and echo and reverberate throughout his heart—"Giovanni! Giovanni! Why tarriest thou? Come down!" And down he hastened into that Eden of poisonous flowers.

But, with all this intimate familiarity, there was still a reserve in Beatrice's demeanor, so rigidly and invariably sustained, that the idea of infringing it scarcely occurred to his imagination. By all appreciable signs, they loved; they had looked love, with eyes that conveyed the holy secret from the depths of one soul into the depths of the other, as if it were too sacred to be whispered by the way; they had even spoken love, in those gushes of passion when their spirits darted forth in articulated breath, like tongues of long-hidden flame; and yet there had been no seal of lips, no clasp of hands, nor any slightest caress, such as love claims and hallows. He had never touched one of the gleaming ringlets of her hair; her garment—so marked was the physical barrier between them—had never been waved against him by a breeze. On the few occasions when Gio-

vanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him. At such times, he was startled at the horrible suspicions that rose, monsterlike, out of the caverns of his heart, and stared him in the face; his love grew thin and faint as the morning mist; his doubts alone had substance. But when Beatrice's face brightened again, after the momentary shadow, she was transformed at once from the mysterious, questionable being, whom he had watched with so much awe and horror; she was now the beautiful and unsophisticated girl, whom he felt that his spirit knew with a certainty beyond all other knowledge.

A considerable time had now passed since Giovanni's last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was disagreeably surprised by a visit from the professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. Given up, as he had long been, to a pervading excitement, he could tolerate no companions, except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling. Such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor chatted carelessly, for a few moments, about the gossip of the city and the University, and then took up another topic.

"I have been reading an old classic author lately," said he, "and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it. It is of an Indian prince who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was as lovely as the dawn, and gorgeous as the sunset; but what especially distinguished her was a certain rich perfume in her breath—richer than a garden of Persian roses. Alexander, as was natural to a youthful conqueror, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger. But a certain sage physician, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in regard to her."

"And what was that?" asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the Professor.

"That this lovely woman," continued Baglioni, with emphasis, "had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was so imbued with them,

that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath, she blasted the very air. Her love would have been poison!—her embrace death! Is not this a marvelous tale?"

"A childish fable," answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. "I marvel how your worship finds time to read such nonsense, among your graver studies."

"By the by," said the Professor, looking uneasily about him, "what singular fragrance is this in your apartment? Is it the perfume of your gloves? It is faint, but delicious, and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, methinks it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower—but I see no flowers in the chamber."

"Nor are there any," replied Giovanni, who had turned pale as the Professor spoke; "nor, I think, is there any fragrance, except in your worship's imagination. Odors, being a sort of element combined of the sensual and the spiritual, are apt to deceive us in this manner. The recollection of a perfume—the bare idea of it—may easily be mistaken for a present reality."

"Ay; but my sober imagination does not often play such tricks," said Baglioni; "and were I to fancy any kind of odor, it would be that of some vile apothecary drug, wherewith my fingers are likely enough to be imbued. Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, tinctures his medicaments with odors richer than those of Araby. Doubtless, likewise, the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would minister to her patients with draughts as sweet as a maiden's breath. But woe to him that sips them!"

Giovanni's face evinced many contending emotions. The tone in which the professor alluded to the pure and lovely daughter of Rappaccini was a torture to his soul; and yet, the intimation of a view of her character, opposite to his own, gave instantaneous distinctness to a thousand dim suspicions, which now grinned at him like so many demons. But he strove hard to quell them, and to respond to Baglioni with a true lover's perfect faith.

"Signor Professor," said he, "you were my father's friend—perchance, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part toward his son. I would fain feel nothing toward you

save respect and deference. But I pray you to observe, Signor, that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You know not the Signora Beatrice. You cannot, therefore, estimate the wrong—the blasphemy, I may even say—that is offered to her character by a light or injurious word."

"Giovanni!—my poor Giovanni!" answered the Professor, with a calm expression of pity, "I know this wretched girl far better than yourself. You shall hear the truth in respect to the poisoner Rappaccini, and his poisonous daughter. Yes; poisonous as she is beautiful! Listen; for even should you do violence to my gray hairs, it shall not silence me. That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth, by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini, and in the person of the lovely Beatrice!"

Giovanni groaned and hid his face.

"Her father," continued Baglioni, "was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child, in this horrible manner, as the victim of his insane zeal for science. For—let us do him justice—he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt, you are selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the result is to be death—perhaps a fate more awful still! Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing."

"It is a dream!" muttered Giovanni to himself, "surely it is a dream!"

"But," resumed the Professor, "be of good cheer, son of my friend! It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly, we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father's madness has estranged her. Behold this little silver vase! It was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini, and is well worthy to be a love gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have rendered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias innocuous. Doubt not that it will be as efficacious against those of Rappaccini. Bestow the vase, and the precious liquid within it, on your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result."

Baglioni laid a small, exquisitely wrought silver phial

on the table, and withdrew, leaving what he had said to produce its effect upon the young man's mind.

"We will thwart Rappaccini yet!" thought he, chuckling to himself, as he descended the stairs. "But, let us confess the truth of him, he is a wonderful man!—a wonderful man indeed! A vile empiric, however, in his practice, and therefore not to be tolerated by those who respect the good old rules of the medical profession!"

Throughout Giovanni's whole acquaintance with Beatrice, he had occasionally, as we have said, been haunted by dark surmises as to her character. Yet, so thoroughly had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, most affectionate and guileless creature, that the image now held up by Professor Baglioni, looked as strange and incredible as if it were not in accordance with his own original conception. True, there were ugly recollections connected with his first glimpses of the beautiful girl; he could not quite forget the bouquet that withered in her grasp, and the insect that perished amid the sunny air, by no ostensible agency save the fragrance of her breath. These incidents, however, dissolving in the pure light of her character, had no longer the efficacy of facts, but were acknowledged as mistaken fantasies, by whatever testimony of the senses they might appear to be substantiated. There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger. On such better evidence, had Giovanni founded his confidence in Beatrice, though rather by the necessary force of her high attributes, than by any deep and generous faith on his part. But, now, his spirit was incapable of sustaining itself at the height to which the early enthusiasm of passion had exalted it; he fell down, groveling among earthly doubts, and defiled therewith the pure whiteness of Beatrice's image. Not that he gave her up; he did but distrust. He resolved to institute some decisive test that should satisfy him, once for all, whether there were those dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature, which could not be supposed to exist without some corresponding monstrosity of soul. His eyes, gazing down afar, might have deceived him as to the lizard, the insect, and the flowers. But if he could witness, at the distance of a few paces, the sudden blight of one fresh and healthful

flower in Beatrice's hand, there would be room for no further question. With this idea, he hastened to the florist's, and purchased a bouquet that was still gemmed with the morning dew drops.

It was now the customary hour of his daily interview with Beatrice. Before descending into the garden, Giovanni failed not to look at his figure in the mirror; a vanity to be expected in a beautiful young man, yet, as displaying itself at that troubled and feverish moment, the token of a certain shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character. He did gaze, however, and said to himself, that his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life.

"At least," thought he, "her poison has not yet insinuated itself into my system. I am no flower to perish in her grasp!"

With that thought he turned his eyes on the bouquet, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A thrill of indefinable horror shot through his frame, on perceiving that those dewy flowers were already beginning to droop; they wore the aspect of things that had been fresh and lovely, yesterday. Giovanni grew white as marble, and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there, as at the likeness of something frightful. He remembered Baglioni's remark about the fragrance that seemed to pervade the chamber. It must have been the poison in his breath! Then he shuddered—shuddered at himself! Recovering from his stupor, he began to watch, with curious eye, a spider that was busily at work, hanging its web from the antique cornice of the apartment, crossing and recrossing the artful system of interwoven lines, as vigorous and active a spider as ever dangled from an old ceiling. Giovanni bent toward the insect, and emitted a deep, long breath. The spider suddenly ceased its toil; the web vibrated with a tremor originating in the body of the small artizan. Again Giovanni sent forth a breath, deeper, longer, and imbued with a venomous feeling out of his heart; he knew not whether he were wicked or only desperate. The spider made a convulsive gripe with his limbs, and hung dead across the window.

"Accursed! Accursed!" muttered Giovanni, addressing himself. "Hast thou grown so poisonous, that this deadly insect perishes by thy breath?"

At that moment, a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden:

"Giovanni! Giovanni! It is past the hour! Why tarriest thou! Come down!"

"Yes," muttered Giovanni again. "She is the only being whom my breath may not slay! Would that it might!"

He rushed down, and in an instant, was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago, his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance. But, with her actual presence, there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off; recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm; recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths, and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic. Giovanni's rage was quelled into an aspect of sullen insensibility. Beatrice, with a quick spiritual sense, immediately felt that there was a gulf of blackness between them, which neither he nor she could pass. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the marble fountain, and to its pool of water on the ground, in the midst of which grew the shrub that bore gemlike blossoms. Giovanni was affrighted at the eager enjoyment—the appetite, as it were—with which he found himself inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

"Beatrice," asked he, abruptly, "whence came this shrub!"

"My father created it," answered she, with simplicity.

"Created it! created it!" repeated Giovanni. "What mean you, Beatrice?"

"He is a man fearfully acquainted with the secrets of nature," replied Beatrice; "and, at the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. Approach it not!" continued she, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the shrub. "It has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni, I grew up and blossomed with the plant, and was nourished with its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with a human affection: for—alas! hast thou not suspected it? there was an awful doom."

Here Giovanni frowned so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her, and made her blush that she had doubted for an instant.

"There was an awful doom," she continued, "the effect of my father's fatal love of science—which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent thee, dearest Giovanni, oh! how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!"

"Was it a hard doom?" asked Giovanni, fixing his eyes upon her.

"Only of late have I known how hard it was," answered she, tenderly. "Oh, yes; but my heart was torpid, and therefore quiet."

Giovanni's rage broke forth from his sullen gloom like a lightning flash out of a dark cloud.

"Accursed one!" cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. "And finding thy solitude wearisome, thou has severed me, likewise, from all the warmth of life, and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!"

"Giovanni!" exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind; she was merely thunderstruck.

"Yes, poisonous thing!" repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. "Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world's wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now—if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to all others—let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred, and so die!"

"What has befallen me?" murmured Beatrice, with a low moan out of her heart. "Holy Virgin, pity me, a poor heart-broken child!"

"Thou! Dost thou pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the same fiendish scorn. "Thy very prayers, as they come from thy lips, taint the atmosphere with death. Yes, yes; let us pray! Let us to church, and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal! They that come after us will perish as by a pestilence. Let us sign crosses in the air! It will be scattering curses abroad in the likeness of holy symbols!"

"Giovanni," said Beatrice, calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "why dost thou join thyself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me. But thou!—what hast thou to do, save, with one other shudder at my hideous misery, to go forth out of the garden and mingle with thy race, and forget that there ever crawled on earth such a monster as poor Beatrice?"

"Dost thou pretend ignorance?" asked Giovanni, scowling upon her. "Behold! This power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini!"

There was a swarm of summer insects flitting through the air, in search of the food promised by the flower odors of the fatal garden. They circled round Giovanni's head, and were evidently attracted toward him by the same influence which had drawn them, for an instant, within the sphere of several of the shrubs. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice, as at least a score of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" shrieked Beatrice. "It is my father's fatal science! No, no, Giovanni; it was not I! Never, never! I dreamed only to love thee, and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart. For, Giovanni—believe it—though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and craves love as its daily food. But my father!—he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes; spurn me!—tread upon me!—kill me! Oh, what is death, after such words as thine? But it was not I! Not for a world of bliss would I have done it!"

Giovanni's passion had exhausted itself in its outburst from his lips. There now came across him a sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair closer together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them? Besides, thought Giovanni, might there not still be a hope of his returning within the limits of ordinary nature, and leading Beatrice—the redeemed Beatrice—by the hand? Oh, weak, and selfish, and unworthy spirit, that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible, after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice's love by Giovanni's blighting words! No, no; there could be no such hope. She must pass heavily, with that broken heart, across the borders—she must bathe her hurts in some fount of Paradise, and forget her grief in the light of immortality—and *there* be well!

But Giovanni did not know it.

"Dear Beatrice," said he, approaching her, while she shrank away, as always at his approach, but now with a different impulse—"dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet so desperate. Behold! There is a medicine, potent, as a wise physician has assured me, and almost divine in its efficacy. It is composed of ingredients the most opposite to those by which thy awful father has brought this calamity upon thee and me. It is distilled of blessed herbs. Shall we not quaff it together, and thus be purified from evil?"

"Give it me!" said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver phial which Giovanni took from his bosom. She added, with a peculiar emphasis: "I will drink—but do thou await the result."

She put Baglioni's antidote to her lips; and, at the same moment, the figure of Rappaccini emerged from the portal, and came slowly toward the marble fountain. As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture or a group of statuary, and finally be satisfied with

his success. He paused—his bent form grew erect with conscious power, he spread out his hand over them, in the attitude of a father imploring a blessing upon his children. But those were the same hands that had thrown poison into the stream of their lives! Giovanni trembled. Beatrice shuddered very nervously, and pressed her hand upon her heart.

"My daughter," said Rappaccini, "thou art no longer lonely in the world! Pluck one of those precious gems from thy sister shrub, and bid thy bridegroom wear it in his bosom. It will not harm him now! My science, and the sympathy between thee and him, have so wrought within his system, that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, through the world, most dear to one another, and dreadful to all besides!"

"My father," said Beatrice, feebly—and still, as she spoke, she kept her hand upon her heart—"wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?"

"Miserable!" exclaimed Rappaccini. "What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts, against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath? Misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none?"

"I would fain have been loved, not feared," murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. "But now it matters not; I am going, father, where the evil, which thou hast striven to mingle with my being, will pass away like a dream — like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my heart—but they, too, will fall away as I ascend. Oh, was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?"

To Beatrice — so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill — as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death. And thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wis-

dom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni. Just at that moment, Professor Pietro Baglioni, looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunder-stricken man of science:—

"Rappaccini! Rappaccini! And is *this* the upshot of your experiment."

THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY[1]

(1863)

By EDWARD EVERETT HALE (1822–1909)

"This story of Philip Nolan was written in the darkest period of the Civil War. There were persons then who thought that if their advice had been taken there need have been no Civil War. There were persons whose everyday pursuits were greatly deranged by the Civil War. I suppose there are such persons now, who look on this war with Spain with a very unfriendly eye, because it disturbs all their plans, and because they think things could have been better done.

"In this crisis, in 1863, an important election was pending in Ohio. A man named Vallandigham, long since forgotten except from his connection with this matter, was the candidate of the party which opposed the National Government. This Mr. Vallandigham had said that he did not want to belong to a nation which would compel by arms the service of any of its citizens: he did not want to belong to the United States. General Burnside, who was the Union commander-in-chief in the West, with the powers of martial law, sent Mr. Vallandigham, with his compliments, to the rebel commander on the other side of the Ohio. He said that if Mr. Vallandigham did not want to live in the United States, the United States did not want to have him there, and pre-

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sented him, with his best respects, to the commanding general of the enemy.

"It was during the election which was to decide whether such a man should be the Governor of Ohio or not that I wrote the story of 'The Man Without a Country,' hoping to quicken the patriotism of people who were called upon to support the general Government, not merely in arms, but by their sympathy, by their taxes, and by caring for the soldier. By an accident in publication, the story though in type was not printed till the Ohio election had passed for some months, and Mr. Vallandigham had been completely forgotten. But it proved that the lesson was a lesson gladly received. I have had letters from seamen who read it as they were lying in our blockade squadrons off the mouths of Southern harbors. I have had letters from men who read it just after the Vicksburg campaign. And in other ways I have had many illustrations of its having been of use in what I have a right to call the darkest period of the Republic."—E. E. HALE.

I SUPPOSE that very few casual readers of the *New York Herald* of August 13, 1863, observed, in an obscure corner among the "Deaths," the announcement,—

"NOLAN. Died, on board U. S. Corvette *Levant*, Lat. 2° 11′ S., Long. 131° W., on the 11th of May, PHILIP NOLAN."

I happened to observe it, because I was stranded at the old Mission House in Mackinaw, waiting for a Lake Superior steamer which did not choose to come, and I was devouring to the very stubble all the current literature I could get hold of, even down to the deaths and marriages in the *Herald*. My memory for names and people is good, and the reader will see, as he goes on, that I had reason enough to remember Philip Nolan. There are hundreds of readers who would have paused at that announcement, if the officer of the *Levant* who reported it had chosen to make it

thus: "Died, May 11, THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY." For it was as "The Man without a Country" that poor Philip Nolan had generally been known by the officers who had him in charge during some fifty years, as, indeed, by all the men who sailed under them. I dare say there is many a man who has taken wine with him once a fortnight, in a three years' cruise, who never knew that his name was "Nolan," or whether the poor wretch had any name at all.

There can now be no possible harm in telling this poor creature's story. Reason enough there has been till now, ever since Madison's administration went out in 1817, for very strict secrecy, the secrecy of honor itself, among the gentlemen of the navy who have had Nolan in successive charge. And certainly it speaks well for the *esprit de corps* of the profession, and the personal honor of its members, that to the press this man's story has been wholly unknown—and, I think, to the country at large also. I have reason to think, from some investigations I made in the Naval Archives when I was attached to the Bureau of Construction, that every official report relating to him was burned when Ross burned the public buildings at Washington. One of the Tuckers, or possibly one of the Watsons, had Nolan in charge at the end of the war; and when, on returning from his cruise, he reported at Washington to one of the Crowninshields—who was in the Navy Department when he came home—he found that the Department ignored the whole business. Whether they really knew nothing about it, or whether it was a "*Non mi ricordo*," determined on as a piece of policy, I do not know. But this I do know, that since 1817, and possibly before, no naval officer has mentioned Nolan in his report of a cruise.

But, as I say, there is no need for secrecy any longer. And now the poor creature is dead, it seems to me worth while to tell a little of his story, by way of showing young Americans of to-day what it is to be A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

Philip Nolan was as fine a young officer as there was in the "Legion of the West," as the Western division of our army was then called. When Aaron Burr made his first dashing expedition down to New Orleans in 1805, at Fort

Massac, or somewhere above on the river, he met, as the devil would have it, this gay, dashing, bright young fellow; at some dinner party, I think. Burr marked him, talked to him, walked with him, took him a day or two's voyage in his flat-boat, and, in short, fascinated him. For the next year, barrack life was very tame to poor Nolan. He occasionally availed himself of the permission the great man had given him to write to him. Long, high-worded, stilted letters the poor boy wrote and rewrote and copied. But never a line did he have in reply from the gay deceiver. The other boys in the garrison sneered at him, because he sacrificed in this unrequited affection for a politician the time which they devoted to Monongahela, hazard, and high-low-jack. Bourbon, euchre, and poker were still unknown. But one day Nolan had his revenge. This time Burr came down the river, not as an attorney seeking a place for his office, but as a disguised conqueror. He had defeated I know not how many district-attorneys; he had dined at I know not how many public dinners; he had been heralded in I don't know how many Weekly Arguses, and it was rumored that he had an army behind him and an empire before him. It was a great day—his arrival—to poor Nolan. Burr had not been at the fort an hour before he sent for him. That evening he asked Nolan to take him out in his skiff, to show him a canebrake or a cotton-wood tree, as he said—really to seduce him; and by the time the sail was over, Nolan was enlisted body and soul. From that time, though he did not yet know it, he lived as A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

What Burr meant to do I know no more than you, dear reader. It is none of our business just now. Only, when the grand catastrophe came, and Jefferson and the House of Virginia of that day undertook to break on the wheel all the possible Clarences of the then House of York, by the great treason trial at Richmond, some of the lesser fry in that distant Mississippi Valley, which was farther from us than Puget's Sound is to-day, introduced the like novelty on their provincial stage; and, to while away the monotony of the summer at Fort Adams, got up, for *spectacles,* a string of court-martials on the officers there. One and another of the colonels and majors were tried, and, to fill out the list, little Nolan, against whom, Heaven knows, there was evi-

dence enough—that he was sick of the service, had been willing to be false to it, and would have obeyed any order to march any-whither with anyone who would follow him had the order been signed, "By command of His Exc. A. Burr." The courts dragged on. The big flies escaped—rightly for all I know. Nolan was proved guilty enough, as I say; yet you and I would never have heard of him, reader, but that, when the president of the court asked him at the close whether he wished to say anything to show that he had always been faithful to the United States, he cried out, in a fit of frenzy,—

"Damn the United States! I wish I may never hear of the United States again!"

I suppose he did not know how the words shocked old Colonel Morgan, who was holding the court. Half the officers who sat in it had served through the Revolution, and their lives, not to say their necks, had been risked for the very idea which he so cavalierly cursed in his madness. He, on his part, had grown up in the West of those days, in the midst of "Spanish plot," "Orleans plot," and all the rest. He had been educated on a plantation where the finest company was a Spanish officer or a French merchant from Orleans. His education, such as it was, had been perfected in commercial expeditions to Vera Cruz, and I think he told me his father once hired an Englishman to be a private tutor for a winter on the plantation. He had spent half his youth with an older brother, hunting horses in Texas; and, in a word, to him "United States" was scarcely a reality. Yet he had been fed by "United States" for all the years since he had been in the army. He had sworn on his faith as a Christian to be true to "United States." It was "United States" which gave him the uniform he wore, and the sword by his side. Nay, my poor Nolan, it was only because "United States" had picked you out first as one of her own confidential men of honor that "A. Burr" cared for you a straw more than for the flat-boat men who sailed his ark for him. I do not excuse Nolan; I only explain to the reader why he damned his country, and wished he might never hear her name again.

He never did hear her name but once again. From that moment, September 23, 1807, till the day he died, May 11,

1863, he never heard her name again. For that half century and more he was a man without a country.

Old Morgan, as I said, was terribly shocked. If Nolan had compared George Washington to Benedict Arnold, or had cried, "God save King George," Morgan would not have felt worse. He called the court into his private room, and returned in fifteen minutes, with a face like a sheet, to say:

"Prisoner, hear the sentence of the Court! The Court decides, subject to the approval of the President, that you never hear the name of the United States again."

Nolan laughed. But nobody else laughed. Old Morgan was too solemn, and the whole room was hushed dead as night for a minute. Even Nolan lost his swagger in a moment. Then Morgan added:

"Mr. Marshal, take the prisoner to Orleans in an armed boat, and deliver him to the naval commander there."

The marshal gave his orders and the prisoner was taken out of court.

"Mr. Marshal," continued old Morgan, "see that no one mentions the United States to the prisoner. Mr. Marshal, make my respects to Lieutenant Mitchell at Orleans, and request him to order that no one shall mention the United States to the prisoner while he is on board ship. You will receive your written orders from the officer on duty here this evening. The court is adjourned without day."

I have always supposed that Colonel Morgan himself took the proceedings of the court to Washington city, and explained them to Mr. Jefferson. Certain it is that the President approved them—certain, that is, if I may believe the men who say they have seen his signature. Before the *Nautilus* got round from New Orleans to the Northern Atlantic coast with the prisoner on board, the sentence had been approved, and he was a man without a country.

The plan then adopted was substantially the same which was necessarily followed ever after. Perhaps it was suggested by the necessity of sending him by water from Fort Adams and Orleans. The Secretary of the Navy—it must have been the first Crowninshield, though he is a man I do not remember—was requested to put Nolan on board a gov-

ernment vessel bound on a long cruise, and to direct that he should be only so far confined there as to make it certain that he never saw or heard of the country. We had few long cruises then, and the navy was very much out of favor; and as almost all of this story is traditional, as I have explained, I do not know certainly what his first cruise was. But the commander to whom he was intrusted—perhaps it was Tingey or Shaw, though I think it was one of the younger men—we are all old enough now—regulated the etiquette and the precautions of the affair, and according to his scheme they were carried out, I suppose, till Nolan died.

When I was second officer of the *Intrepid,* some thirty years after, I saw the original paper of instructions. I have been very sorry ever since that I did not copy the whole of it. It ran, however, much in this way:

"WASHINGTON (with a date which must have been late in 1807).

"SIR—You will receive from Lieutenant Neale the person of Philip Nolan, late a lieutenant in the United States Army.

"This person on his trial by court-martial expressed, with an oath, the wish that he might 'never hear of the United States again.'

"The Court sentenced him to have his wish fulfilled.

"For the present, the execution of the order is intrusted by the President to this Department.

"You will take the prisoner on board your ship, and keep him there with such precautions as shall prevent his escape.

"You will provide him with such quarters, rations, and clothing as would be proper for an officer of his late rank, if he were a passenger on your vessel on the business of his Government.

"The gentlemen on board will make any arrangements agreeable to themselves regarding his society. He is to be exposed to no indignity of any kind, nor is he ever unnecessarily to be reminded that he is a prisoner.

"But under no circumstances is he ever to hear of his country or to see any information regarding it; and you will

especially caution all the officers under your command to take care, that, in the various indulgences which may be granted, this rule, in which his punishment is involved, shall not be broken.

"It is the intention of the Government that he shall never again see the country which he has disowned. Before the end of your cruise you will receive orders which will give effect to this intention.

"Respectfully yours,
"W. SOUTHARD, for the
"Secretary of the Navy."

If I had only preserved the whole of this paper, there would be no break in the beginning of my sketch of this story. For Captain Shaw, if it were he, handed it to his successor in the charge, and he to his, and I suppose the commander of the *Levant* has it to-day as his authority for keeping this man in this mild custody.

The rule adopted on board the ships on which I have met "the man without a country" was, I think, transmitted from the beginning. No mess liked to have him permanently, because his presence cut off all talk of home or of the prospect of return, of politics or letters, of peace or of war—cut off more than half the talk men liked to have at sea. But it was always thought too hard that he should never meet the rest of us, except to touch hats, and we finally sank into one system. He was not permitted to talk with the men, unless an officer was by. With officers he had unrestrained intercourse, as far as they and he chose. But he grew shy, though he had favorites: I was one. Then the captain always asked him to dinner on Monday. Every mess in succession took up the invitation in its turn. According to the size of the ship, you had him at your mess more or less often at dinner. His breakfast he ate in his own stateroom—he always had a stateroom—which was where a sentinel or somebody on the watch could see the door. And whatever else he ate or drank, he ate or drank alone. Sometimes, when the marines or sailors had any special jollification, they were permitted to invite "Plain-Buttons," as they called him. Then Nolan was sent with some officer, and the men were forbidden to speak of home while he was there. I

believe the theory was that the sight of his punishment did them good. They called him "Plain-Buttons," because, while he always chose to wear a regulation army uniform, he was not permitted to wear the army button, for the reason that it bore either the initials or the insignia of the country he had disowned.

I remember, soon after I joined the navy, I was on shore with some of the older officers from our ship and from the *Brandywine*, which we had met at Alexandria. We had leave to make a party and go up to Cairo and the Pyramids. As we jogged along (you went on donkeys then), some of the gentlemen (we boys called them "Dons," but the phrase was long since changed) fell to talking about Nolan, and some one told of the system which was adopted from the first about his books and other reading. As he was almost never permitted to go on shore, even though the vessel lay in port for months, his time at the best hung heavy; and everybody was permitted to lend him books, if they were not published in America and made no allusion to it. These were common enough in the old days, when people in the other hemisphere talked of the United States as little as we do of Paraguay. He had almost all the foreign papers that came into the ship, sooner or later; only somebody must go over them first, and cut out any advertisement or stray paragraph that alluded to America. This was a little cruel sometimes, when the back of what was cut out might be as innocent as Hesiod. Right in the midst of one of Napoleon's battles, or one of Canning's speeches, poor Nolan would find a great hole, because on the back of the page of that paper there had been an advertisement of a packet for New York, or a scrap from the President's message. I say this was the first time I ever heard of this plan, which afterwards I had enough and more than enough to do with. I remember it, because poor Phillips, who was of the party, as soon as the allusion to reading was made, told a story of something which happened at the Cape of Good Hope on Nolan's first voyage; and it is the only thing I ever knew of that voyage. They had touched at the Cape, and had done the civil thing with the English Admiral and the fleet, and then, leaving for a long cruise up the Indian Ocean, Phillips had borrowed a lot of English books from an officer, which, in those days,

as indeed in these, was quite a windfall. Among them, as the devil would order, was the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," which they had all of them heard of, but which most of them had never seen. I think it could not have been published long. Well, nobody thought there could be any risk of anything national in that, though Phillips swore old Shaw had cut out the "Tempest" from Shakespeare before he let Nolan have it, because he said "the Bermudas ought to be ours, and, by Jove, should be one day." So Nolan was permitted to join the circle one afternoon when a lot of them sat on deck smoking and reading aloud. People do not do such things so often now; but when I was young we got rid of a great deal of time so. Well, so it happened that in his turn Nolan took the book and read to the others; and he read very well, as I know. Nobody in the circle knew a line of the poem, only it was all magic and Border chivalry, and was ten thousand years ago. Poor Nolan read steadily through the fifth canto, stopped a minute and drank something, and then began, without a thought of what was coming:

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,"—

It seems impossible to us that anybody ever heard this for the first time; but all these fellows did then, and poor Nolan himself went on, still unconsciously or mechanically:

"This is my own, my native land!"

Then they all saw something was to pay; but he expected to get through, I suppose, turned a little pale, but plunged on:

"Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?—
If such there breathe, go, mark him well,"—

By this time the men were all beside themselves, wishing there was any way to make him turn over two pages; but he had not quite presence of mind for that; he gagged a little, colored crimson, and staggered on:

> "For him no minstrel raptures swell;
> High though his titles, proud his name,
> Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,
> Despite these titles, power, and pelf,
> The wretch, concentred all in self,"—

and here the poor fellow choked, could not go on, but started up, swung the book into the sea, vanished into his stateroom, "And by Jove," said Phillips, "we did not see him for two months again. And I had to make up some beggarly story to that English surgeon why I did not return his Walter Scott to him."

That story shows about the time when Nolan's braggadocio must have broken down. At first, they said, he took a very high tone; considered his imprisonment a mere farce, affected to enjoy the voyage, and all that; but Phillips said that after he came out of his stateroom he never was the same man again. He never read aloud again, unless it was the Bible or Shakespeare, or something else he was sure of. But it was not that merely. He never entered in with the other young men exactly as a companion again. He was always shy afterwards, when I knew him—very seldom spoke, unless he was spoken to, except to a very few friends. He lighted up occasionally—I remember late in his life hearing him fairly eloquent on something which had been suggested to him by one of Fléchier's sermons—but generally he had the nervous, tired look of a heart-wounded man.

When Captain Shaw was coming home—if, as I say, it was Shaw—rather to the surprise of everybody they made one of the Windward Islands, and lay off and on for nearly a week. The boys said the officers were sick of salt-junk, and meant to have turtle soup before they came home. But after several days the *Warren* came to the same rendezvous; they exchanged signals; she sent to Phillips and these homeward-bound men letters and papers, and told them she was outward-bound, perhaps to the Mediterranean, and took poor Nolan and his traps on the boat back to try his second cruise. He looked very blank when he was told to get ready to join her. He had known enough of the signs of the sky to know that till that moment he was going "home." But this was a distinct evidence of something he had not

thought of, perhaps—that there was no going home for him, even to a prison. And this was the first of some twenty such transfers, which brought him sooner or later into half our best vessels, but which kept him all his life at least some hundred miles from the country he had hoped he might never hear of again.

It may have been on that second cruise—it was once when he was up the Mediterranean—that Mrs. Graff, the celebrated Southern beauty of those days, danced with him. They had been lying a long time in the Bay of Naples, and the officers were very intimate in the English fleet, and there had been great festivities, and our men thought they must give a great ball on board the ship. How they ever did it on board the *Warren* I am sure I do not know. Perhaps it was not the *Warren,* or perhaps ladies did not take up so much room as they do now. They wanted to use Nolan's stateroom for something, and they hated to do it without asking him to the ball; so the captain said they might ask him, if they would be responsible that he did not talk with the wrong people, "who would give him intelligence." So the dance went on, the finest party that had ever been known, I dare say; for I never heard of a man-of-war ball that was not. For ladies they had the family of the American consul, one or two travelers who had adventured so far, and a nice bevy of English girls and matrons, perhaps Lady Hamilton herself.

Well, different officers relieved each other in standing and talking with Nolan in a friendly way, so as to be sure that nobody else spoke to him. The dancing went on with spirit, and after a while even the fellows who took this honorary guard of Nolan ceased to fear any *contretemps.* Only when some English lady—Lady Hamilton, as I said, perhaps—called for a set of "American dances," an odd thing happened. Everybody then danced contra-dances. The black band, nothing loath, conferred as to what "American dances" were, and started off with "Virginia Reel," which they followed with "Money-Musk," which, in its turn in those days, should have been followed by "The Old Thirteen." But just as Dick, the leader, tapped for his fiddles to begin, and bent forward, about to say, in true negro state, "'The Old Thirteen,' gentlemen and ladies!" as he had

said "'Virginny Reel,' if you please!" and "'Money-Musk,' if you please!" the captain's boy tapped him on the shoulder, whispered to him, and he did not announce the name of the dance; he merely bowed, began on the air, and they all fell to—the officers teaching the English girls the figure, but not telling them why it had no name.

But that is not the story I started to tell. As the dancing went on, Nolan and our fellows all got at ease, as I said—so much so, that it seemed quite natural for him to bow to that splendid Mrs. Graff, and say:

"I hope you have not forgotten me, Miss Rutledge. Shall I have the honor of dancing?"

He did it so quickly, that Fellows, who was with him, could not hinder him. She laughed and said:

"I am not Miss Rutledge any longer, Mr. Nolan; but I will dance all the same," just nodded to Fellows, as if to say he must leave Mr. Nolan to her, and led him off to the place where the dance was forming.

Nolan thought he had got his chance. He had known her at Philadelphia, and at other places had met her, and this was a Godsend. You could not talk in contra-dances, as you do in cotillions, or even in the pauses of waltzing; but there were chances for tongues and sounds, as well as for eyes and blushes. He began with her travels, and Europe, and Vesuvius, and the French; and then, when they had worked down, and had that long talking time at the bottom of the set, he said boldly—a little pale, she said, as she told me the story years after:

"And what do you hear from home, Mrs. Graff?"

And that splendid creature looked through him. Jove! how she must have looked through him!

"Home!! Mr. Nolan!!! I thought you were the man who never wanted to hear of home again!"—and she walked directly up the deck to her husband, and left poor Nolan alone, as he always was.—He did not dance again. I cannot give any history of him in order; nobody can now; and, indeed, I am not trying to.

These are the traditions, which I sort out, as I believe them, from the myths which have been told about this man for forty years. The lies that have been told about him are legion. The fellows used to say he was the "Iron

Mask"; and poor George Pons went to his grave in the belief that this was the author of "Junius," who was being punished for his celebrated libel on Thomas Jefferson. Pons was not very strong in the historical line.

A happier story than either of these I have told is of the war. That came along soon after. I have heard this affair told in three or four ways—and, indeed, it may have happened more than once. But which ship it was on I cannot tell. However, in one, at least, of the great frigate-duels with the English, in which the navy was really baptized, it happened that a round-shot from the enemy entered one of our ports square, and took right down the officer of the gun himself, and almost every man of the gun's crew. Now you may say what you choose about courage, but that is not a nice thing to see. But, as the men who were not killed picked themselves up, and as they and the surgeon's people were carrying off the bodies, there appeared Nolan, in his shirt-sleeves, with the rammer in his hand, and, just as if he had been the officer, told them off with authority—who should go to the cockpit with the wounded men, who should stay with him—perfectly cheery, and with that way which makes men feel sure all is right and is going to be right. And he finished loading the gun with his own hands, aimed it, and bade the men fire. And there he stayed, captain of that gun, keeping those fellows in spirits, till the enemy struck—sitting on the carriage while the gun was cooling, though he was exposed all the time—showing them easier ways to handle heavy shot—making the raw hands laugh at their own blunders—and when the gun cooled again, getting it loaded and fired twice as often as any other gun on the ship. The captain walked forward by way of encouraging the men, and Nolan touched his hat and said:

"I am showing them how we do this in the artillery, sir."

And this is the part of the story where all the legends agree; the commodore said:

"I see you do, and I thank you, sir; and I shall never forget this day, sir; and you never shall, sir."

And after the whole thing was over, and he had the Englishman's sword, in the midst of the state and ceremony of the quarterdeck, he said:

"Where is Mr. Nolan? Ask Mr. Nolan to come here."

And when Mr. Nolan came, he said:

"Mr. Nolan, we are all very grateful to you to-day; you are one of us to-day; you will be named in the dispatches."

And then the old man took off his own sword of ceremony, and gave it to Nolan, and made him put it on. The man told me this who saw it. Nolan cried like a baby, and well he might. He had not worn a sword since that infernal day at Fort Adams. But always afterwards on occasions of ceremony, he wore that quaint old French sword of the commodore's.

The captain did mention him in the dispatches. It was always said he asked that he might be pardoned. He wrote a special letter to the Secretary of War. But nothing ever came of it. As I said, that was about the time when they began to ignore the whole transaction at Washington, and when Nolan's imprisonment began to carry itself on because there was nobody to stop it without any new orders from home.

I have heard it said that he was with Porter when he took possession of the Nukahiwa Islands. Not this Porter, you know, but old Porter, his father, Essex Porter—that is, the old Essex Porter, not this Essex. As an artillery officer, who had seen service in the West, Nolan knew more about fortifications, embrasures, ravelins, stockades, and all that, than any of them did; and he worked with a right good will in fixing that battery all right. I have always thought it was a pity Porter did not leave him in command there with Gamble. That would have settled all the question about his punishment. We should have kept the islands, and at this moment we should have one station in the Pacific Ocean. Our French friends, too, when they wanted this little watering-place, would have found it was preoccupied. But Madison and the Virginians, of course, flung all that away.

All that was near fifty years ago. If Nolan was thirty then, he must have been near eighty when he died. He looked sixty when he was forty. But he never seemed to me to change a hair afterwards. As I imagine his life, from what I have seen and heard of it, he must have been in every sea, and yet almost never on land. He must have known, in a formal way, more officers in our service than

any man living knows. He told me once, with a grave smile, that no man in the world lived so methodical a life as he. "You know the boys say I am the Iron Mask, and you know how busy he was." He said it did not do for anyone to try to read all the time, more than to do anything else all the time; but that he read just five hours a day. "Then," he said, "I keep up my notebooks, writing in them at such and such hours from what I have been reading; and I include in these my scrap-books." These were very curious indeed. He had six or eight, of different subjects. There was one of History, one of Natural Science, one of which he called "Odds and Ends." But they were not merely books of extracts from newspapers. They had bits of plants and ribbons, shells tied on, and carved scraps of bone and wood, which he had taught the men to cut for him, and they were beautifully illustrated. He drew admirably. He had some of the funniest drawings there, and some of the most pathetic, that I have ever seen in my life. I wonder who will have Nolan's scrap-books.

Well, he said his reading and his notes were his profession, and that they took five hours and two hours respectively of each day. "Then," said he, "every man should have a diversion as well as a profession. My Natural History is my diversion." That took two hours a day more. The men used to bring him birds and fish, but on a long cruise he had to satisfy himself with centipedes and cockroaches and such small game. He was the only naturalist I ever met who knew anything about the habits of the housefly and the mosquito. All those people can tell you whether they are *Lepidoptera* or *Steptopotera;* but as for telling how you can get rid of them, or how they get away from you when you strike them—why Linnæus knew as little of that as John Foy the idiot did. These nine hours made Nolan's regular daily "occupation." The rest of the time he talked or walked. Till he grew very old, he went aloft a great deal. He always kept up his exercise; and I never heard that he was ill. If any other man was ill, he was the kindest nurse in the world; and he knew more than half the surgeons do. Then if anybody was sick or died, or if the captain wanted him to, on any other occasion, he was always ready to read prayers. I have said that he read beautifully.

My own acquaintance with Philip Nolan began six or eight years after the English war, on my first voyage after I was appointed a midshipman. It was in the first days after our Slave-Trade treaty, while the Reigning House, which was still the House of Virginia, had still a sort of sentimentalism about the suppression of the horrors of the Middle Passage, and something was sometimes done that way. We were in the South Atlantic on that business. From the time I joined, I believe I thought Nolan was a sort of lay chaplain—a chaplain with a blue coat. I never asked about him. Everything in the ship was strange to me. I knew it was green to ask questions, and I suppose I thought there was a "Plain-Buttons" on every ship. We had him to dine in our mess once a week, and the caution was given that on that day nothing was to be said about home. But if they had told us not to say anything about the planet Mars or the Book of Deuteronomy, I should not have asked why; there were a great many things which seemed to me to have as little reason. I first came to understand anything about "the man without a country" one day when we overhauled a dirty little schooner which had slaves on board. An officer was sent to take charge of her, and, after a few minutes, he sent back his boat to ask that some one might be sent him who could speak Portuguese. We were all looking over the rail when the message came, and we all wished we could interpret, when the captain asked who spoke Portuguese. But none of the officers did; and just as the captain was sending forward to ask if any of the people could, Nolan stepped out and said he should be glad to interpret, if the captain wished, as he understood the language. The captain thanked him, fitted out another boat with him, and in this boat it was my luck to go.

When we got there, it was such a scene as you seldom see, and never want to. Nastiness beyond account, and chaos run loose in the midst of the nastiness. There were not a great many of the negroes; but by way of making what there were understand that they were free, Vaughan had had their handcuffs and ankle-cuffs knocked off, and, for convenience sake, was putting them upon the rascals of the schooner's crew. The negroes were, most of them, out of the hold, and swarming all round the dirty deck, with a central throng

surrounding Vaughan and addressing him in every dialect, and *patois* of a dialect, from the Zulu click up to the Parisian of Beledeljereed.

As we came on deck, Vaughan looked down from a hogshead, on which he had mounted in desperation, and said:

"For God's love, is there anybody who can make these wretches understand something? The men gave them rum, and that did not quiet them. I knocked that big fellow down twice, and that did not soothe him. And then I talked Choctaw to all of them together; and I'll be hanged if they understood that as well as they understood the English."

Nolan said he could speak Portuguese, and one or two fine-looking Kroomen were dragged out, who, as it had been found already, had worked for the Portuguese on the coast at Fernando Po.

"Tell them they are free," said Vaughan; "and tell them that these rascals are to be hanged as soon as we can get rope enough."

Nolan "put that into Spanish"—that is, he explained it in such Portuguese as the Kroomen could understand, and they in turn to such of the negroes as could understand them. Then there was such a yell of delight, clinching of fists, leaping and dancing, kissing of Nolan's feet, and a general rush made to the hogshead by way of spontaneous worship of Vaughan, as the *deux ex machina* of the occasion.

"Tell them," said Vaughan, well pleased, "that I will take them all to Cape Palmas."

This did not answer so well. Cape Palmas was practically as far from the homes of most of them as New Orleans or Rio Janeiro was; that is, they would be eternally separated from home there. And their interpreters, as we could understand, instantly said, *"Ah, non Palmas,"* and began to propose infinite other expedients in most voluble language. Vaughan was rather disappointed at this result of his liberality, and asked Nolan eagerly what they said. The drops stood on poor Nolan's white forehead, as he hushed the men down, and said:

"He says, 'Not Palmas.' He says, 'Take us home, take us to our own country, take us to our own house, take us to our own pickaninnies and our own women.' He says he has an old father and mother who will die if they do not

see him. And this one says he left his people all sick, and paddled down to Fernando to beg the white doctor to come and help them, and that these devils caught him in the bay just in sight of home, and that he has never seen anybody from home since then. And this one says," choked out Nolan, "that he has not heard a word from his home in six months, while he has been locked up in an infernal barracoon."

Vaughan always said he grew gray himself while Nolan struggled through this interpretation. I, who did not understand anything of the passion involved in it, saw that the very elements were melting with fervent heat, and that something was to pay somewhere. Even the negroes themselves stopped howling, as they saw Nolan's agony, and Vaughan's almost equal agony of sympathy. As quick as he could get words, he said:

"Tell them yes, yes, yes; tell them they shall go to the Mountains of the Moon, if they will. If I sail the schooner through the Great White Desert, they shall go home!"

And after some fashion Nolan said so. And then they all fell to kissing him again, and wanted to rub his nose with theirs.

But he could not stand it long; and getting Vaughan to say he might go back, he beckoned me down into our boat. As we lay back in the stern-sheets and the men gave way, he said to me: "Youngster, let that show you what it is to be without a family, without a home, and without a country. And if you are ever tempted to say a word or to do a thing that shall put a bar between you and your family, your home, and your country, pray God in his mercy to take you that instant home to his own heaven. Stick by your family, boy; forget you have a self, while you do everything for them. Think of your home, boy; write and send, and talk about it. Let it be nearer and nearer to your thought, the farther you have to travel from it; and rush back to it when you are free, as that poor black slave is doing now. And for your country, boy," and the words rattled in his throat, "and for that flag," and he pointed to the ship, "never dream a dream but of serving her as she bids you, though the service carry you through a thousand hells. No matter what happens to you, no matter who flatters you or who abuses you, never

look at another flag, never let a night pass but you pray God to bless that flag. Remember, boy, that behind all these men you have to do with, behind officers, and government, and people even, there is the Country Herself, your Country, and that you belong to Her as you belong to your own mother. Stand by Her, boy, as you would stand by your mother, if those devils there had got hold of her to-day!"

I was frightened to death by his calm, hard passion; but I blundered out that I would, by all that was holy, and that I had never thought of doing anything else. He hardly seemed to hear me; but he did, almost in a whisper, say: "O, if anybody had said so to me when I was of your age!"

I think it was this half-confidence of his, which I never abused, for I never told this story till now, which afterwards made us great friends. He was very kind to me. Often he sat up, or even got up, at night, to walk the deck with me, when it was my watch. He explained to me a great deal of my mathematics, and I owe to him my taste for mathematics. He lent me books, and helped me about my reading. He never alluded so directly to his story again; but from one and another officer I have learned, in thirty years, what I am telling. When we parted from him in St. Thomas harbor, at the end of our cruise, I was more sorry than I can tell. I was very glad to meet him again in 1830; and later in life, when I thought I had some influence in Washington, I moved heaven and earth to have him discharged. But it was like getting a ghost out of prison. They pretended there was no such man, and never was such a man. They will say so at the Department now! Perhaps they do not know. It will not be the first thing in the service of which the Department appears to know nothing!

There is a story that Nolan met Burr once on one of our vessels, when a party of Americans came on board in the Mediterranean. But this I believe to be a lie; or, rather, it is a myth, *ben trovato,* involving a tremendous blowing-up with which he sunk Burr—asking him how he liked to be "without a country." But it is clear from Burr's life, that nothing of the sort could have happened; and I mention this only as an illustration of the stories which get a-going where there is the least mystery at bottom.

So poor Philip Nolan had his wish fulfilled. I know but

one fate more dreadful; it is the fate reserved for those men who shall have one day to exile themselves from their country because they have attempted her ruin, and shall have at the same time to see the prosperity and honor to which she rises when she has rid herself of them and their iniquities. The wish of poor Nolan, as we all learned to call him, not because his punishment was too great, but because his repentance was so clear, was precisely the wish of every Bragg and Beauregard who broke a soldier's oath two years ago, and of every Maury and Barron who broke a sailor's. I do not know how often they have repented. I do know that they have done all that in them lay that they might have no country—that all the honors, associations, memories, and hopes which belong to "country" might be broken up into little shreds and distributed to the winds. I know, too, that their punishment, as they vegetate through what is left of life to them in wretched Boulognes and Leicester Squares, where they are destined to upbraid each other till they die, will have all the agony of Nolan's, with the added pang that everyone who sees them will see them to despise and to execrate them. They will have their wish, like him.

For him, poor fellow, he repented of his folly, and then, like a man, submitted to the fate he had asked for. He never intentionally added to the difficulty or delicacy of the charge of those who had him in hold. Accidents would happen; but they never happened from his fault. Lieutenant Truxton told me that, when Texas was annexed, there was a careful discussion among the officers, whether they should get hold of Nolan's handsome set of maps and cut Texas out of it—from the map of the world and the map of Mexico. The United States had been cut out when the atlas was bought for him. But it was voted, rightly enough, that to do this would be virtually to reveal to him what had happened, or, as Harry Cole said, to make him think Old Burr had succeeded. So it was from no fault of Nolan's that a great botch happened at my own table, when, for a short time, I was in command of the *George Washington* corvette, on the South American station. We were lying in the La Plata, and some of the officers, who had been on shore and had just joined again, were entertaining us with accounts of their misadventures in riding the half-wild horses of

Buenos Ayres. Nolan was at table, and was in an unusually bright and talkative mood. Some story of a tumble reminded him of an adventure of his own when he was catching wild horses in Texas with his adventurous cousin, at a time when he must have been quite a boy. He told the story with a good deal of spirit—so much so, that the silence which often follows a good story hung over the table for an instant, to be broken by Nolan himself. For he asked perfectly unconsciously:

"Pray, what has become of Texas? After the Mexicans got their independence, I thought that province of Texas would come forward very fast. It is really one of the finest regions on earth; it is the Italy of this continent. But I have not seen or heard a word of Texas for near twenty years."

There were two Texan officers at the table. The reason he had never heard of Texas was that Texas and her affairs had been painfully cut out of his newspapers since Austin began his settlements; so that, while he read of Honduras and Tamaulipas, and, till quite lately, of California—this virgin province, in which his brother had traveled so far, and, I believe, had died, had ceased to be to him. Waters and Williams, the two Texas men, looked grimly at each other and tried not to laugh. Edward Morris had his attention attracted by the third link in the chain of the captain's chandelier. Watrous was seized with a convulsion of sneezing. Nolan himself saw that something was to pay, he did not know what. And I, as master of the feast, had to say:

"Texas is out of the map, Mr. Nolan. Have you seen Captain Back's curious account of Sir Thomas Roe's Welcome?"

After that cruise I never saw Nolan again. I wrote to him at least twice a year, for in that voyage we became even confidentially intimate; but he never wrote to me. The other men tell me that in those fifteen years he *aged* very fast, as well he might indeed, but that he was still the same gentle, uncomplaining, silent sufferer that he ever was, bearing as best he could his self-appointed punishment—rather less social, perhaps, with new men whom he did not know, but more anxious, apparently, than ever to serve and befriend and teach the boys, some of whom fairly seemed to worship

him. And now it seems the dear old fellow is dead. He has found a home at last, and a country.

Since writing this, and while considering whether or no I would print it, as a warning to the young Nolans and Vallandighams and Tatnalls of to-day of what it is to throw away a country, I have received from Danforth, who is on board the *Levant,* a letter which gives an account of Nolan's last hours. It removes all my doubts about telling this story.

To understand the first words of the letter, the non-professional reader should remember that after 1817, the position of every officer who had Nolan in charge was one of the greatest delicacy. The government had failed to renew the order of 1807 regarding him. What was a man to do? Should he let him go? What, then, if he were called to account by the Department for violating the order of 1807? Should he keep him? What, then, if Nolan should be liberated some day, and should bring an action for false imprisonment or kidnapping against every man who had had him in charge? I urged and pressed this upon Southard, and I have reason to think that other officers did the same thing. But the Secretary always said, as they so often do at Washington, that there were no special orders to give, and that we must act on our own judgment. That means, "If you succeed, you will be sustained; if you fail, you will be disavowed." Well, as Danforth says, all that is over now, though I do not know but I expose myself to a criminal prosecution on the evidence of the very revelation I am making.

Here is the letter:

"LEVANT, 2° 2′ S. @ 131° W.

"DEAR FRED: I try to find heart and life to tell you that it is all over with dear old Nolan. I have been with him on this voyage more than I ever was, and I can understand wholly now the way in which you used to speak of the dear old fellow. I could see that he was not strong, but I had no idea the end was so near. The doctor has been watching him very carefully, and yesterday morning came to me and told me that Nolan was not so well, and had not left his stateroom—a thing I never remember before. He had let the doctor come and see him as he lay there—the first time

the doctor had been in the stateroom—and he said he should like to see me. Oh dear! do you remember the mysteries we boys used to invent about his room in the old *Intrepid* days. Well, I went in, and there, to be sure, the poor fellow lay in his berth, smiling pleasantly as he gave me his hand, but looking very frail. I could not help a glance round, which showed me what a little shrine he had made of the box he was lying in. The stars and stripes were triced up above and around a picture of Washington, and he had painted a majestic eagle, with lightnings blazing from his beak and his foot just clasping the whole globe, which his wings overshadowed. The dear old boy saw my glance, and said, with a sad smile, 'Here, you see, I have a country!' And then he pointed to the foot of his bed, where I had not seen before, a great map of the United States, as he had drawn it from memory, and which he had there to look upon as he lay. Quaint, queer old names were on it, in large letters: 'Indiana Territory,' 'Mississippi Territory,' and 'Louisiana Territory,' as I suppose our fathers learned such things: but the old fellow had patched in Texas, too; he had carried his western boundary all the way to the Pacific, but on that shore he had defined nothing.

"'O Danforth,' he said, 'I know I am dying. I cannot get home. Surely you will tell me something now?—Stop! stop! Do not speak till I say what I am sure you know, that there is not in this ship, that there is not in America—God bless her!—a more loyal man than I. There cannot be a man who loves the old flag as I do, or prays for it as I do, or hopes for it as I do. There are thirty-four stars in it now, Danforth. I thank God for that, though I do not know what their names are. There has never been one taken away: I thank God for that. I know by that that there has never been any successful Burr. O Danforth, Danforth,' he sighed out, 'how like a wretched night's dream a boy's idea of personal fame or of separate sovereignty seems, when one looks back on it after such a life as mine! But tell me—tell me something—tell me everything, Danforth, before I die!'

"Ingham, I swear to you that I felt like a monster that I had not told him everything before. Danger or no danger, delicacy or no delicacy, who was I, that I should have been

acting the tyrant all this time over this dear, sainted old man, who had years ago expiated, in his whole manhood's life, the madness of a boy's treason? 'Mr. Nolan,' said I, 'I will tell you everything you ask about. Only, where shall I begin?'

"Oh, the blessed smile that crept over his white face; and he pressed my hand and said, 'God bless you!' 'Tell me their names,' he said, and he pointed to the stars on the flag. 'The last I know is Ohio. My father lived in Kentucky. But I have guessed Michigan and Indiana and Mississippi—that was where Fort Adams is—they make twenty. But where are your other fourteen? You have not cut up any of the old ones, I hope?'

"Well, that was not a bad text, and I told him the names in as good order as I could, and he bade me take down his beautiful map and draw them in as I best could with my pencil. He was wild with delight about Texas, told me how his cousin died there; he had marked a gold cross near where he supposed his grave was; and he had guessed at Texas. Then he was delighted as he saw California and Oregon; that, he said, he had suspected partly, because he had never been permitted to land on that shore, though the ships were there so much. 'And the men,' said he, laughing, 'brought off a good deal besides furs.' Then he went back—heavens, how far!—to ask about the *Chesapeake,* and what was done to Barron for surrendering her to the *Leopard,* and whether Burr ever tried again—and he ground his teeth with the only passion he showed. But in a moment that was over, and he said, 'God forgive me, for I am sure I forgive him.' Then he asked about the old war—told me the true story of his serving the gun the day we took the *Java*—asked about dear old David Porter, as he called him. Then he settled down more quietly, and very happily, to hear me tell in an hour the history of fifty years.

"How I wished it had been somebody who knew something. But I did as well as I could. I told him of the English war. I told him about Fulton and the steamboat beginning. I told him about old Scott, and Jackson; told him all I could think of about the Mississippi, and New Orleans, and Texas, and his own old Kentucky. And do you think, he asked who was in command of the 'Legion of the

West.' I told him it was a very gallant officer named Grant, and that, by our last news, he was about to establish his headquarters at Vicksburg. Then, 'Where was Vicksburg?' I worked that out on the map; it was about a hundred miles, more or less, above his old Fort Adams; and I thought Fort Adams must be a ruin now. 'It must be at old Vick's plantation, at Walnut Hills,' said he: 'well, that is a change!'

"I tell you, Ingham, it was a hard thing to condense the history of half a century into that talk with a sick man. And I do not now know what I told him—of emigration, and the means of it—of steamboats, and railroads, and telegraphs—of inventions, and books, and literature—of the colleges, and West Point, and the Naval School—but with the queerest interruptions that ever you heard. You see it was Robinson Crusoe asking all the accumulated questions of fifty-six years!

"I remember he asked, all of a sudden, who was President now; and when I told him, he asked if Old Abe was General Benjamin Lincoln's son. He said he met old General Lincoln, when he was quite a boy himself, at some Indian treaty. I said no, that Old Abe was a Kentuckian like himself, but I could not tell him of what family; he had worked up from the ranks. 'Good for him!' cried Nolan; 'I am glad of that. As I have brooded and wondered, I have thought our danger was in keeping up those regular successions in the first families.' Then I got talking about my visit to Washington. I told him of meeting the Oregon Congressman, Harding; I told him about the Smithsonian, and the Exploring Expedition; I told him about the Capitol, and the statues for the pediment, and Crawford's Liberty, and Greenough's Washington. Ingham, I told him everything I could think of that would show the grandeur of his country and its prosperity; but I could not make up my mouth to tell him a word about this infernal rebellion!

"And he drank it in and enjoyed it as I cannot tell you. He grew more and more silent, yet I never thought he was tired or faint. I gave him a glass of water, but he just wet his lips, and told me not to go away. Then he asked me to bring the Presbyterian 'Book of Public Prayer,' which lay there, and said, with a smile, that it would open at the

right place—and so it did. There was his double red mark down the page; and I knelt down and read, and he repeated with me, 'For ourselves and our country, O gracious God, we thank Thee, that, notwithstanding our manifold transgressions of Thy holy laws, Thou hast continued to us Thy marvelous kindness,'—and so to the end of that thanksgiving. Then he turned to the end of the same book, and I read the words more familiar to me: 'Most heartily we beseech Thee with Thy favor to behold and bless Thy servant, the President of the United States, and all others in authority,'—and the rest of the Episcopal collect. 'Danforth,' said he, 'I have repeated those prayers night and morning, it is now fifty-five years.' And then he said he would go to sleep. He bent me down over him and kissed me; and he said, 'Look in my Bible, Danforth, when I am gone.' And I went away.

"But I had no thought it was the end. I thought he was tired and would sleep. I knew he was happy, and I wanted him to be alone.

"But in an hour, when the doctor went in gently, he found Nolan had breathed his life away with a smile. He had something pressed close to his lips. It was his father's badge of the Order of the Cincinnati.

"We looked in his Bible, and there was a slip of paper at the place where he had marked the text:

"'They desire a country, even a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.'

"On this slip of paper he had written:

"'Bury me in the sea; it has been my home, and I love it. But will not some one set up a stone for my memory at Fort Adams or at Orleans, that my disgrace may not be more than I ought to bear? Say on it:

"'*In Memory of*

"'PHILIP NOLAN,

"'*Lieutenant in the Army of the United States.*

"'He loved his country as no other man has loved her; but no man deserved less at her hands.'"

MASTER AND MAN[1]

(1886)

By LEO TOLSTOI (1828–)

W. D. Howells says of his master passion, Tolstoi, that he "awakens in the reader the will to be a man, not effectively, not spectacularly, but simply, really."

As one reads Tolstoi's own carefully thought-out sentences on "What is Art?" one finds this to be the whole theory of art, and one may take this story of "Master and Man" as illustrating Howells's conclusion and Tolstoi's theory of what the artist exists for. "By words," Tolstoi says, "a man transmits his thoughts to another, by means of art he transmits his feelings." And at the close of his essay: "The task for art to accomplish is to make that feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor, now attained only by the best members of the society, the customary feeling and the instinct of all men." And again: "The destiny of art in our time is to transmit from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that well-being for men consists in being united together and to set up in place of the existing reign of force that kingdom of God, *i.e.*, of love, which we all recognize to be the highest aim of human life." "The task for Christian art is to establish brotherly union among men."

This ever-present cry of Tolstoi's as the expression of

[1] Translated from the Russian by S. Rapoport and John C. Kenworthy. Reprinted by permission of T. Y. Crowell and Company.

his view of human relations and of the purpose of art is perfectly exemplified in this story of "Master and Man."

I

It happened in the seventies, in winter, on the day after St. Nicholas' day. There was a holiday in the parish, and the village innkeeper and second-guild merchant, Vasili Andreich Brekhunov, could not go away, as he had to attend church (he was a churchwarden), and go receive and entertain friends and acquaintances at home. But at last, all the guests were gone, and Vasili Andreich began preparations for a drive over to a neighboring landowner, to buy from him the forest for which they had been bargaining this long while. He was very anxious to go, so as to forestall the town merchants, who might snatch away this profitable purchase. The youthful landowner only asked ten thousand roubles for the forest, while Vasili Andreich offered seven thousand. In reality, seven thousand was but a third of the real worth of the property. Vasili Andreich might, perhaps, be able to drive the better bargain, because the forest stood in his district, and by an old standing agreement between him and the other village merchants, no one of them competed in another's territory. But Vasili Andreich had learned that the timber merchants from the capital town of the province intended to bid for the Goryachkin forest, and he decided to go at once and conclude the bargain. Accordingly, as soon as the feast was over, he took seven hundred roubles of his own from the strong box, added to them twenty-three hundred belonging to the church, and after carefully counting the whole, he put the money in his pocket book and made haste to be gone. Nikita, the laborer, the only one of Vasili Andreich's men who was not drunk that day, ran to harness the horse. He was not drunk on this occasion, because he was a drunkard; since the last day before the fast, when he spent his coat and boots in drink, he had forsworn his debauchery and kept sober for the next month. He was not drinking even now, in spite of the temptation arising from the uni-

versal absorption of alcohol during the first two days of the holiday.

Nikita was a fifty-year-old "moujik" from the neighboring village; an "unreliable" man, as folk called him, "one who lived most of his life with other people" and not at his own home. He was esteemed everywhere for his industry, quickness, and strength; and still more, for his kindliness and pleasantness. But he could never live long in one place, because about twice a year, or even oftener, he gave way to drink; and at such times, besides spending all he had, he became turbulent and quarrelsome. Vasili Andreich had dismissed him several times, and afterward engaged him again; valuing his honesty and kindness to animals, but chiefly his cheapness. The merchant did not pay Nikita eighty roubles, the worth of such a man, but forty; and even that he paid without regular account, in small installments, and mostly not in cash, but in high-priced goods from his own shop.

Nikita's wife, Martha, a vigorous and once beautiful woman, carried on the home, with a boy and two girls. She never pressed Nikita to live at home; firstly, because she had lived for about twenty years with a cooper, a moujik from another village, who lodged with them; and secondly, because, although she treated her husband as she pleased when he was sober, she feared him like fire when he was drinking. Once, when drunk at home, Nikita, perhaps to counterbalance his sober humility, broke open his wife's box, took her best clothes, and seizing an axe, cut to shreds all her gala-dress and garments. The whole wages which Nikita earned went to his wife, without objection from him. It was in pursuance of this arrangement that Martha, two days before the holiday, came to Vasili Andreich, and got from him wheat, flour, tea, sugar, with a pint of vodka,—about three roubles worth in all—and five roubles in cash; for which she gave thanks as for a great and special favor, when in fact, and at the lowest figure, the merchant owed twenty roubles.

"What agreement did I make with you?" said Vasili Andreich to Nikita. "If you want anything, take it; you will work it out. I am not like other folks, with their putting-off, and accounts, and fines. We are dealing straight-

forwardly. You work for me, and I stand by you. What you need, I give it to you."

Talking in this way, the merchant was honestly convinced of his beneficence to Nikita; and he spoke with such assertion that every one, beginning with Nikita, confirmed him in this conviction.

"I understand, Vasili Andreich, I do my best, I try to do as I would for my own father. I understand all right," answered Nikita; understanding very well that he is cheated, but at the same time feeling that it is useless to try to get the accounts cleared up. While there is nowhere else to go, he must stay where he is, and take what he can get.

When Nikita was told by his master to put the horse in, willingly and cheerfully as always, and with a firm and easy stride, he stepped to the cart shed, took down from the nail the heavy, tasseled, leather bridle, and jingling the rings of the bit, went to the stable where stood the horse which Vasili Andreich had bidden to be harnessed.

"Well, silly, are you tired, tired?" said Nikita, in answer to the soft whinny which greeted him from the stallion, a fairly good dark bay of medium height, with sloping quarters, who stood solitary in his stall. "Quiet, quiet, there's plenty of time! Let me give you a drink first," he went on to the horse, as though speaking to a creature with reason. With the skirt of his coat he swept down the horse's broad, double-ridged back, roughed and dusty as it was; then he put the bridle on the handsome, young head, arranged his ears and mane, and led him away to drink. Picking his way out of the dung-strewn stable, the dark bay began to plunge, making play with his hind foot, as though to kick Nikita, who was hurrying him to the well.

"Now then, now then, you rogue," said Nikita; knowing Moukhorta was careful that the hind foot went no further than his fur coat, doing no hurt; and knowing how the horse liked this play.

After the cold water, the horse stood awhile, breathing, and moving his wet, strong lips, from which transparent drops fell into the trough; then he sniffed.

"If you want no more, you needn't take it. Well, let it be at that; but don't ask again for more," said Nikita, quite seriously emphasizing to Moukhorta the consequences of his

behavior. Then he briskly led back to the shed, pulling the rein on the young horse, who lashed out all the way along the yard.

No other men were about, except a stranger to the place, the husband of the cook, who had come for a holiday.

"Go and ask, there's a good fellow, which sledge is wanted, the wide one or the little one," said Nikita to him.

The cook's husband went away, and soon returned with the answer, that the small one was ordered. By this time, Nikita had harnessed the horse, fixed the brass-studded saddle, and carrying in one hand the light-painted yoke, with the other hand he led the horse toward the two sledges which stood under the shed.

"All right, let us have the small one," said he, backing the intelligent horse (which all the time pretended to bite at him) into the shaft; and with the help of the cook's husband, he began to harness.

When all was nearly ready, and only the reins needed fixing, Nikita sent the cook's husband to the shed for straw, and to the storehouse for the rug.

"That's nice. Don't, don't, don't bristle up!" said Nikita, squeezing into the sledge the freshly-thrashed oatstraw which the cook's husband had brought. "Now give me the sacking, while we spread it out, and put the rug over it. That's all right, just the thing, comfortable to sit on," said he, doing that which he was talking about, and making the rug tight over the straw all round.

"Thanks, my dear fellow," said Nikita to the cook's husband. "When two work, it's done quicker." Then, disentangling the leather reins, the ends of which were brought together and tied on a ring, he took the driver's seat on the sledge, and shook up the good horse; who stirred himself, eager to make across the frozen refuse that littered the yard, toward the gate.

"Uncle Mikit, eh, uncle!" came a shout behind him, from a seven-year-old boy in black fur cloak, new, white felt boots and warm cap, who slammed the door as he hurried from the entrance hall toward the yard. "Put me in!" he asked, in a shrill voice, buttoning his cloak as he ran.

"All right, come, my dove," said Nikita; and stopping

the sledge, he put in the master's son, full of joy, and drove out into the road.

It was three o'clock, and cold (about ten degrees of frost), gloomy and windy. In the yard, it seemed quiet, but in the street, a strong breeze blew. The snow showered down from the roof of the barn close by, and at the corner by the baths, flew whirling round. Nikita had scarcely driven out and turned round by the front door, when Vasili Andreich, too, with a cigarette in his mouth, wearing a sheepskin overcoat tightly fastened by a girdle placed low, came out from the entrance hall. He strode down the trampled snow of the steps, which creaked under his boots, and stopped to turn in the corners of his overcoat collar on both sides of his ruddy face (clean shaven, except for a mustache), so as to keep the fur clear from the moisture of his breath.

"See there! What a manager! Here he is!" said he, smiling and showing his white teeth, on catching sight of his little son on the sledge. Vasili Andreich was excited by the wine he had taken with his guests, and was therefore more than usually pleased with everything which belonged to him, or which was of his doing. His wife, a pale and meager woman, about to become a mother, stood behind him in the entrance hall, with a woolen plaid so wrapped about her head and shoulders, that only her eyes could be seen.

"Would it not be better to take Nikita with you?" she asked, timidly, stepping out from the door. Vasili Andreich answered nothing, but spat. "You have money with you," the wife continued, in the same plaintive voice. "What if the weather gets worse. Be careful, for God's sake."

"Do you think I don't know the road, that I need a guide?" retorted Vasili Andreich, with that affected compression of the lips which he used when speaking among dealers in the market, as though he valued his own speech.

"Really, do take him, I ask you, for God's sake!" repeated his wife, folding her plaid closer.

"Just listen! She sticks to it like a leaf in the bath! Why, where must I take him to?"

"Well, Vasili Andreich, I'm ready," said Nikita, cheer-

fully. "If I'm away, there are only the horses to be fed," he added, turning to his mistress.

"I'll look after that, Nikitushka; I'll tell Simon," answered the mistress.

"Shall I come, Vasili Andreich?" asked Nikita, waiting.

"It seems we must consider the old women. But if you come, go and put on something warmer," said Vasili Andreich, smiling once more, and winking at Nikita's fur coat, which was very old, torn under the arms and down the back, and soiled and crease-worn round the skirts.

"Hey, friend, come and hold the horse a while!" shouted Nikita to the cook's husband, in the yard.

"I'll hold him myself," said the little boy, taking his cold, red hands out of his pockets, and seizing the cold leather reins.

"Only don't be too long putting your best coat on! Be quick!" shouted Vasili Andreich, jestingly, to Nikita.

"In a breath, good master Vasili Andreich!" said Nikita, and he ran down the yard to the laborers' quarters.

"Now, Arinushka, give me my overcoat off the ovens, I have to go with the master!" said Nikita, hastening into the room, and taking his girdle down from the nail.

The cook, who had just finished her after-dinner nap, and was about to get ready the samovar for her husband, turned to Nikita merrily, and catching his haste, moved about quickly, took the worn-out woolen overcoat off the oven, where it was drying, and shook and rubbed it.

"How comfortable you must be, with your husband here," said Nikita to the cook; always, as part of his good-natured politeness, ready to say something to any one whom he came across. Then putting round himself the narrow and worn girdle, he drew in his breath and tightened it about his spare body.

"There," he said, afterward, addressing himself, not to the cook, but to the girdle, while tucking the ends under his belt. "This way, you won't jump out." Then working his shoulders up and down to get his arms loose, he put on the overcoat, again stretching his back to free his arms; and that done, he took his mittens from the shelf. "Now, we're all right."

"You ought to change your boots," said the cook, "those boots are very bad."

Nikita stopped, as if remembering something.

"Yes, I ought. . . . But it will be all right; it's not far." And he ran out into the yard.

"Won't you be cold, Nikitushka?" said his mistress, as he came up to the sledge.

"Why should I be cold? It is quite warm," answered Nikita, arranging the straw in the forepart of the sledge, so as to bring it over the feet, and stowing under it the whip which a good horse would not need.

Vasili Andreich was already in the sledge, almost filling up the whole of the curved back with the bulk of his body wrapped in two great fur coats; and taking up the reins, he started at once. Nikita jumped in, seating himself in front, to the left, and hanging one leg over the side.

II

THE good stallion sped the sledge along at a brisk pace, over the trodden and frozen road; the runners creaking faintly as they went.

"Look at him there, hanging on! Give me the whip, Nikita," shouted Vasili Andreich, evidently enjoying the sight of his boy holding to the sledge-runners, behind. "I'll give it you! Run to your mother, you young dog!"

The boy jumped off. The dark bay began to amble, and then, getting his breath, broke into a trot.

Kresty, the village where the home of Vasili Andreich stood, consisted of six houses. Scarcely had they passed the blacksmith's house, when they suddenly felt the wind to be stronger than they had thought. The road was no longer visible. The tracks of the sledge as they were left behind, were instantly covered with snow, and the road was only to be distinguished by its rise above the land on either side. The snow swept over the plain like thick smoke, and the horizon disappeared. The Telyatin forest, always particularly visible, loomed dimly through the driving snow dust. The wind came from the left hand, persistently blowing aside the mane on Moukhorta's lofty neck, turning away even his knotted tail, and pressing the deep collar of Ni-

kita's overcoat (he sat on the windward side) against his face and nose.

"There is no chance of his showing speed, with this snow," said Vasili Andreich, proud of his horse. "I once went to Pashutino with him, and we got there in half an hour."

"What?"

"Pashutino, I said, and he did it in half an hour."

"A good horse that, no question," said Nikita.

They became silent. But Vasili Andreich wanted to talk.

"Now I think of it, did you tell your good woman not to give any drink to the cooper?" asked the merchant, who was wholly of opinion that Nikita must feel flattered, talking with such an important and sensible man as himself. He was so pleased with this, his own jest, that it never entered his head that the subject might be unpleasant to Nikita.

Again the man failed to catch his master's words, the voice being carried away by the wind.

Vasili Andreich, in his clear and loud voice, repeated the jest about the cooper.

"God help them, master, I don't think about the matter. I only watch that she does no harm to the boy; if she does —then God help her!"

"That is right," said Vasili Andreich. "Well, are you going to buy a horse in the spring?" thus he began a new topic of conversation.

"I must buy one," answered Nikita, turning aside the collar of his coat, and leaning toward his master. The conversation had become interesting to him, and he did not wish to lose a word.

"My lad is grown up, and it is time he ploughed for himself, and gave up hiring out," said he.

"Well, then, take that horse with the thin loins; the price will not be high," shouted Vasili Andreich, eagerly entering into his favorite business of horse dealing, to which he gave all his powers.

"You had better give me fifteen roubles, and I'll buy in the market," said Nikita; who knew that at the highest price, the horse with the thin loins, which his master wanted to sell to him, was not worth more than seven roubles, but

would cost him, at his master's hands, twenty-five; and that meant half a year's wages gone.

"The horse is a good one. I treat you as I would myself. Honestly. Brekhunov injures no man. Let me stand the loss, and me only. Honestly," he shouted in the voice which he used in cheating his customers, "a genuine horse."

"As you think," said Nikita, sighing, sure that it was useless to listen further; and he again drew the collar over his ear and face.

They drove in silence for about half an hour. The wind cut sharply into Nikita's side and arm, where his coat was torn. He huddled himself up and breathed in his coat collar, which covered his mouth; and breathing this way seemed to make him warmer.

"What do you think, shall we go through Karamyshevo, or keep the straight road?" said Vasili Andreich.

The road through Karamyshevo was more frequented, and staked on both sides; but it was longer. The straight road was nearer, but it was little used, and the stakes, now snow covered, marked it out but badly.

Nikita thought a while.

"Through Karamyshevo is farther, but it is better going," he said.

"But straight on, we have only to be careful in passing the little valley, and then the way is fairly good," said Vasili Andreich, who favored the direct road.

"As you say," replied Nikita.

So the merchant went his own way. After driving about half a verst, passing a waymark, a long branch of oak, which shook in the wind, and on which a dry leaf hung here and there, he turned to the left.

Upon turning, the wind blew almost directly against them, and the snow showered from on high. Vasili Andreich stirred up the horse, and inflated his cheeks, blowing his breath upon his mustaches. Nikita dozed.

They drove thus silently for about ten minutes. Then the merchant began to say something.

"What?" asked Nikita, opening his eyes.

Vasili Andreich did not answer, but bent himself about, looking behind them, and then ahead of the horse. The

sweat had curled the animal's coat on the groin and neck, and he was going at a walk.

"I say, what's the matter?" repeated Nikita.

"What is the matter?" mocked Vasili Andreich, irritated. "I see no waymarks. We must be off the road."

"Well, pull up then, and I will find the road," said Nikita, and lightly jumping down, he drew out the whip from the straw, and struck out to the left, from his own side of the sledge.

The snow was not deep that season, but in places it was up to one's knee, and Nikita got it into his boots. He walked about, feeling with his feet and the whip, but could nowhere find the road.

"Well?" said the merchant, when Nikita returned to the sledge.

"There is no road on this side. I must try the other."

"What is that dark thing in front? Go and see," said Vasili Andreich.

Nikita walked ahead; got near the dark patch; and found it was black earth which the wind had strewn over the snow, from some fields of winter wheat. After searching to the right also, he returned to the sledge, shook the snow off himself, cleared his boots, and took his seat.

"We must go to the right," he said, decidedly. "The wind was on our left before, now it is straight ahead. To the right," he repeated, with the same decision.

Vasili Andreich turned accordingly. But yet no road was found. He drove on for some time. The wind kept up, and the snow still fell.

"We seem to be astray altogether, Vasili Andreich," said Nikita, suddenly, and as pleasantly as possible.

"What is that?" he said, pointing to some black potato leaves, which thrust themselves through the snow.

Vasili Andreich stopped the horse, which by this time was in heavy perspiration, and stood with its deep sides heaving. "What can it mean?" asked he.

"It means that we are on the Zakharian lands. Why, we are ever so far astray!"

"Bosh!" remarked Vasili Andreich, who now spoke quite otherwise than when at home; in an unconstrained and vulgar tone.

"I am telling you no lie; it is true," said Nikita. "You can feel that the sledge is moving over a potato field, and there are the heaps of old leaves. It is the Zakharian factory land."

"What a long way we are out!" said the other. "What are we to do?"

"Go straight ahead, that's all. We shall reach some place," said Nikita. "If we do not get to Zakharovka, we shall come out at the owner's farm."

Vasili Andreich assented, and let the horse go as Nikita had said. They drove in this way for a long while. At times they passed winter-wheat fields, where the wind had turned up and blown loose soil over the snow-covered dykes and the snow drifts. Sometimes they passed a stubble field, sometimes a corn field, where they could see the upstanding wormwood and straw beaten by the wind; sometimes they saw on all sides deep, white snow, with nothing above it. The snow whirled down from on high, and up from below. Now they seemed to be going downhill, and now uphill; then they seemed as though standing still, while the snow field ran past them. Both were silent. The horse was evidently tiring; his coat grew crisp and white with frost, and he no better than walked. Suddenly he stumbled in some ditch or watercourse, and went down. Vasili Andreich wanted to halt, but Nikita opposed him.

"Why should we stop? We have gone astray, and we must find our road. Hey, old fellow, hey," he shouted in an encouraging voice to the horse; and he jumped from the sledge, sinking into the ditch. The horse dashed forward, and quickly landed upon a frozen heap. Obviously it was a made ditch.

"Where are we then?" said Vasili Andreich.

"We shall see," answered Nikita. "Go ahead, we shall get to somewhere."

"Is not that the Goryachkino forest?" asked the merchant, pointing out a dark mass which showed across the snow in front of them.

"When we get nearer, we shall see what forest it is," said Nikita.

He noticed that from the side of the dark mass, long, dry willow leaves were fluttering toward them; and he knew

thereby that it was no forest, but houses; yet he chose not to say so. And in fact, they had scarcely gone twenty-five yards, when they distinctly made out the trees, and heard a new and melancholy sound. Nikita was right; they had come upon, not a forest, but a row of tall willow trees, whereon a few scattered leaves still shivered. The willows were evidently ranged along the ditch, and around a barn. Coming up to the trees, through which the wind moaned and sighed, the horse suddenly planted his forefeet above the height of the sledge, then drew up his hind legs after him, and they were out of the snow and on the road.

"Here we are," said Nikita, "but we don't know where."

The horse went right away along the snow-covered road, and they had not gone many yards when they saw a fence round a barn, from which the snow was flying in the wind. Passing the barn the road turned in the direction of the wind, and brought them upon a snowdrift. But ahead of them was a passage between two houses; the drift was merely blown across the road, and must be crossed. Indeed, after passing the drift, they found a village street. In front of the end house of the village, the wind was shaking desperately the frozen linen which hung there; shirts, one red, one white, some leg cloths, and a skirt. The white shirt especially shook frantically, tugging at the sleeves.

"Look there, either a lazy woman, or a dead one, left her linen out over the holiday," said Nikita, seeing the fluttering shirts.

III

At the beginning of the street, the wind was still felt, and the road was snow covered. But well within the village, there was shelter, more warmth, and life. At one house a dog barked; at another, a woman, with her husband's coat over her head, came running from within, and stopped at the door to see who was driving past. In the middle of the village could be heard the sound of girls singing. Here, the wind, the snow, the frost, seemed subdued.

"Why, this is Grishkino," said Vasili Andreich.

"It is," said Nikita.

Grishkino it was. It turned out they had strayed eight versts to the left, out of their proper direction; still, they had got somewhat nearer to their destination. From Grishkino to Goryachkino was about five versts more.

In the middle of the village they almost ran into a tall man, walking in the center of the road.

"Who is driving?" said this man, and he held the horse. Then, recognizing Vasili Andreich, he took hold of the shaft, and leaped up to the sledge, where he sat himself on the driver's seat.

It was the moujik Isai, well known to the merchant, and known through the district as a first-rate horsethief.

"Ah, Vasili Andreich, where is God sending you?" said Isai, from whom Nikita caught the smell of vodka.

"We are going to Goryachkino."

"You've come a long way round! You had better have gone through Malakhovo."

"Yes, but we got astray," said Vasili Andreich, pulling up.

"A good horse," said Isai, examining him, and dexterously tightening the loosened knot in his tail. "Are you going to stay the night here?"

"No, friend, we must go on."

"Your business must be pressing. And who is that? Ah, Nikita Stepanich!"

"Who else?" answered Nikita. "Look here, good friend, can you tell us how not to miss the road again?"

"How can you possibly miss it? Just turn back straight along the street, and then, outside the houses, keep straight ahead. Don't go to the left until you reach the high road, then turn to the left."

"And which turning do we take out of the high road? The summer or the winter road?" asked Nikita.

"The winter road. As soon as you get clear of the village there are some bushes, and opposite them is a way mark, an oaken one, all branches. There is the road."

Vasili Andreich turned the horse back, and drove through the village.

"You had better stay the night," Isai shouted after them. But the merchant did not answer; five versts of smooth road, two versts of it through the forest, was easy enough

to drive over; especially as the wind seemed quieter, and the snow seemed to have ceased.

After passing along the street, darkened and trodden with fresh horse tracks, and after passing the house where the linen was hung out (a sleeve of the white shirt was by this time torn off, and the garment hung by one frozen sleeve), they came to the weirdly moaning and sighing willows, and then were again in the open country. Not only was the snowstorm still raging, but it seemed to have gained strength. The whole road was under snow, and only the stakes, the way marks, proved that they were keeping right. But even these signs of the road were difficult to make out, for the wind blew right in their faces.

Vasili Andreich screwed up his eyes, and bent his head, examining the marks; but for the most part, he left the horse alone, trusting to his sagacity. And, in fact, the creature went truly, turning now to the left, now to the right, along the windings of the road which he sensed under his feet. So that in spite of the thickening snow and strengthening wind, the way marks were still to be seen, now on the left, now on the right.

They had driven thus for ten minutes, when suddenly, straight in front of their horse, a black object sprang up, moving through the snow. Moukhorta had come up with a sledge containing other travelers, and he struck his fore feet against it.

"Drive round! Go ahead!" cried these others.

Vasili Andreich shaped to go round them. In the sledge were four peasants, three men and a woman; evidently returning from a feast. One of the men whipped the quarters of their poor horse with a switch, while two of them, waving their arms from the fore part of the sledge, shouted out something. The woman, muffled up and covered with snow, sat quiet and rigid at the back.

"Who are you?" asked Vasili Andreich.

"A-a-a!" was all that could be heard.

"I say, who are you?"

"A-a-a!" shouted one of the peasants, with all his strength; but nevertheless, it was impossible to make out the name.

"Go on! don't surrender!"

"You have been enjoying yourselves."

"Get on! get on! Up, Semka! Step out! Up, up!"

The sledges struck together, almost locked their sides, then fell apart, and the peasants' sledge began to drop behind. The shaggy, snow-covered, big-bellied pony, obviously distressed, was making his last efforts with his short legs to struggle along through the deep snow, which he trod down with labor. For a moment, with distended nostrils, and ears set back in distress, he kept his muzzle, which was that of a young horse, near Nikita's shoulder; then he began to fall still further behind.

"See what drink does," said Nikita. "They have tired that horse to death. What heathens!"

For a few minutes, the pantings of the tired-out horse could be heard, with the drunken shouts of the peasants. Then the pantings become inaudible; and the shouts, also. Again all was silent, except for the whistling wind and the occasional scrape of the sledge runners upon a bare spot of road.

This encounter livened up and encouraged Vasili Andreich, who drove more boldly, not examining the way marks, and again trusting to his horse.

Nikita had nothing to occupy him, and dozed. Suddenly the horse stopped, and Nikita was jerked forward, knocking his nose against the front.

"It seems we are going wrong again," said Vasili Andreich.

"What is the matter?"

"The way marks are not to be seen. We must be out of the road."

"Well, if so, let us look for the road," said Nikita, laconically; and he got out again to explore the snow. He walked for a long time, now out of sight, now reappearing, then disappearing; at last, he returned.

"There is no road here; it may be further on," said he, sitting down in the sledge.

It began to grow dark. The storm neither increased nor diminished.

"I should like to meet those peasants again," said Vasili Andreich.

"Yes, but they won't pass near us; we must be a good

distance off the road. Maybe they are astray, too," said Nikita.

"Where shall we make for, then?"

"Leave the horse to himself. He will find his way. Give me the reins."

The merchant handed over the reins; the more willingly that his hands, in spite of his warm gloves, felt the frost.

Nikita took the reins, and held them lightly, trying to give no pressure; he was glad to prove the good sense of his favorite. The intelligent horse, turning one ear and then the other, first in this, then in that direction, presently began to wheel round.

"He only stops short of speaking," said Nikita. "Look how he manages it! Go on, go on, that's good."

The wind was now at their backs; they were warmer.

"Is he not wise?" continued Nikita, delighted with his horse. "A Kirghiz beast is strong, but stupid. But this one—look what he is after with his ears. There is no need of a telegraph wire; he can feel through a mile."

Hardly half an hour had gone, when a forest, or a village, or something, loomed up in front; and to their right, the way marks again showed. Evidently they were upon the road again.

"We are back at Grishkino, are we not?" exclaimed Nikita, suddenly.

Indeed, on the left hand rose the same barn, with the snow flying from it; and farther on was the same line with the frozen shirts and drawers, so fiercely shaken by the wind.

Again they drove through the street, again felt the quiet and shelter, again saw the road with the horse tracks; heard voices, songs, the barking of a dog. It was now so dark that a few windows were lighted.

Halfway down the street, Vasili Andreich turned round the horse toward a large house, and stopped at the yard gate.

"Call out Tarass," he ordered Nikita.

Nikita went up to the snow-dimmed window, in the light from which glittered the flitting flakes, and knocked with the handle of the whip.

"Who is there?" a voice answered to his knock.

"The Brekhunovs, from Kresty, my good man," answered Nikita. "Come out for a minute."

Some one moved from the window, and in about two minutes the door in the entrance hall was heard to open, the latch of the front door clicked, and holding the door against the wind, there peeped out an old, white-bearded man, who wore a high cap, and a fur coat over a white holiday shirt. Behind him was a young fellow in a red shirt and leather boots.

"Glad to see you," said the old man.

"We have lost our road, friend," said Vasili Andreich. "We set out for Goryachkino, and found ourselves here. Then we went on, but lost the road again."

"I see; what a wandering!" answered the old man. "Petrushka, come, open the gates," he said, to the young man in the red shirt.

"Of course I will," said the young fellow, cheerfully, as he ran off through the entrance hall.

"We are not stopping for the night, friend," said Vasili Andreich.

"Where can you go, in darkness? You had better stop."

"Should be very glad to, but I must go on."

"Well, then, at least warm yourself a little; the samovar is just ready," said the old man.

"Warm ourselves? We can do that," said Vasili Andreich. "It cannot get darker, and when the moon is up, it will be still lighter. Come, Nikita, let us go in and warm up a bit."

"I don't object; yes, let us warm ourselves," said Nikita, who was very cold, and whose one desire was to warm his benumbed limbs over the oven.

Vasili Andreich went with the old man into the house. Nikita drove through the gate which Petrushka opened, and by the latter's advice, stood the horse under a shed, the floor of which was strewn with stable litter. The high bow over the horse caught the roof beam, and the hens and a cock perched up there, began to cackle and scratch on the wood. Some startled sheep, pattering their feet on the frozen floor, huddled themselves out of the way. A dog, evidently a young one, yelped desperately in fright, and barked fiercely at the stranger.

Nikita held conversation with them all. He begged pardon from the fowls, and calmed them with assurances that he would give them no more trouble; he reproved the sheep for being needlessly frightened; and while fastening up the horse, he kept on exhorting the little dog.

"That will do," said he, shaking the snow from himself. "Hear, how he is barking!" added he, for the dog's benefit. "That's quite enough for you, quite enough, stupid! That will do! Why do you bother yourself? There are no thieves or strangers about."

"It is like the tale of the Three Domestic Counsellors," said the young man, thrusting the sledge under the shed with his strong arm.

"What counsellors?"

"The tale is in P'uls'n. A thief sneaks up to a house; the dog barks—that means 'Don't idle, take care'; the cock crows—that means 'Get up'; the cat washes itself—that means 'A welcome guest is coming, be ready for him,'" said the young man, with a broad smile.

Petrushka could read and write, and knew, almost by heart, the only book he possessed, which was Paulsen's primer; and he liked, especially when, as now, he had a little too much to drink, to quote from the book some saying which seemed appropriate to the occasion.

"Quite true," said Nikita.

"I suppose you are cold, uncle," said Petrushka.

"Yes, something that way," said Nikita. They both crossed the yard and entered the house.

IV

THE house at which Vasili Andreich had drawn up was one of the richest in the village. The family had five fields, and besides these, hired others outside. Their belongings included six horses, three cows, two heifers, and a score of sheep. In the house lived twenty-two souls; four married sons, six grandchildren (of whom one, Petrushka, was married), two great-grandchildren, three orphans, and four daughters-in-law with their children. It was one of the few families which maintain their unity; yet even here was beginning that indefinable interior discord—as usual

among the women—which must soon bring about separation. Two sons were water carriers in Moscow; one was in the army. At present, those at home were the old man, his wife, one son who was head of the house, another son who came from Moscow on a holiday, and all the women and children. Besides the family there was a guest, a neighbor, who was the elder of the village.

In the house, there hung over the table a shaded lamp, which threw a bright light down upon the tea-service, a bottle of vodka and some eatables; and upon the brick wall of the corner where hung the holy images with pictures on each side of them. At the head of the table sat Vasili Andreich, in his black fur coat, sucking his frozen mustaches, and scrutinizing the people and the room with his eyes of a hawk. Beside him at the table sat the white-bearded, bald, old father of the house, in a white home-spun shirt; by him, wearing a thin cotton shirt, sat a son with sturdy back and shoulders, the one who was holiday-making from Moscow; then the other son, the strapping eldest brother who acted as head of the house; then the village elder, a lean and red-haired moujik.

The moujiks, having drunk and eaten, prepared to take tea; the samovar already boiled, standing on the floor near the oven. The children were in evidence about the oven and the sleeping shelves. On the bench along the wall sat a woman with a cradle beside her. The aged mother of the house, whose face was wrinkled all over, even to the lips, waited on Vasili Andreich. As Nikita entered the room, she filled up a coarse glass with vodka, and handed it to Vasili Andreich.

"No harm done, Vasili Andreich, but you must drink our good health," said the old man.

The sight and smell of vodka, especially in his cold and tired condition, greatly disturbed Nikita's mind. He became gloomy, and after shaking the snow from his coat and hat, stood before the holy images; without noticing the others, he made the sign of the cross thrice, and bowed to the images; then, turning to the old man, he bowed to him first, afterward to all who sat at table, and again to the women beside the oven, saying: "Good fortune to your feast." Without looking at the table, he began to take off his overcoat.

"Why, you are all over frost, uncle," said the eldest brother, looking at the rime on Nikita's face, eyes and beard.

Nikita got his coat off, shook it, hung it near the oven, and came to the table. They offered him vodka, also. There was a moment's bitter struggle; he wavered on the point of taking the glass and pouring the fragrant, transparent liquid into his mouth. But he looked at Vasili Andreich, remembered his vow, remembered the lost boots, the cooper, his son for whom he had promised to buy a horse when the spring came; he sighed, and refused.

"I don't drink, thank you humbly," he said gloomily, and sat down on the bench, near the second window.

"Why not?" asked the eldest brother.

"I don't drink, that's all," said Nikita, not daring to raise his eyes, and looking at the thawing icicles in his beard and mustache.

"It is not good for him," said Vasili Andreich, munching a biscuit after emptying his glass.

"Then have some tea," said the kindly old woman. "I dare say you are quite benumbed, good soul. What a while you women are with the samovar."

"It is ready," answered the youngest, and wiping round the samovar with an apron, she bore it heavily to the table, and set it down with a thud.

Meanwhile, Vasili Andreich told how they had gone astray, and worked back twice to the same village; what mistakes they had made, and how they had met the drunken peasants. Their hosts expressed surprise, showed why and where they had missed the road, told them the names of the revelers they had met, and made plain how they ought to go.

"From here to Molchanovka, a child might go; the only thing is to make sure where to turn out of the high road, just beside the bushes. But yet you did not get there," said the village elder.

"You ought to stop here. The women will make up a bed," said the old woman, persuasively.

"You would make a better start in the morning; much pleasanter, that," said the old man, affirming what his wife had said.

"Impossible, friend! Business!" said Vasili Andreich.

"If you let an hour go, you may not be able to make it up in a year," added he, remembering the forest and the dealers who were likely to compete with him. "By all means, let us stretch out," he said, turning to Nikita.

"We may lose ourselves again," said Nikita, moodily. He was gloomy, because of the intense longing he felt for the vodka; and the tea, the only thing which could quench that longing, had not yet been offered to him.

"We have only to reach the turning, and there is no more danger of losing the road, as it goes straight through the forest," said Vasili Andreich.

"Just as you say, Vasili Andreich; if you want to go, let us go," said Nikita, taking the glass of tea offered to him.

"Well, let us drink up our tea, and then march!"

Nikita said nothing, but shook his head; and carefully pouring the tea into the saucer, began to warm his hands over the steam. Then, taking a small bite of sugar in his mouth, he turned to their hosts, said "Your health," and drank down the warming liquid.

"Could anyone come with us to the turning?" asked Vasili Andreich.

"Why not? Certainly," said the eldest son. "Petrushka will put in the horse, and go with you as far as the turning."

"Then put in your horse, and I shall be in your debt."

"My dear man," said the kindly old woman, "we are right glad to do it."

"Petrushka, go and put in the mare," said the eldest son.

"All right," said Petrushka, with his broad smile; and taking his cap from the nail, he hurried away to harness the horse.

While the harnessing was in progress, the talk turned back to the point where it stood when Vasili Andreich arrived. The old man had complained to the village elder about the conduct of his third son, who had sent him no present this holiday time, though he had sent a French shawl to his wife.

"These young folk are getting worse and worse," said the old man.

"Very much worse!" said the village elder. "They are unmanageable. They know too much. There's Demochkin,

now, who broke his father's arm. It all comes from too much learning."

Nikita listened, watched the faces; seeming as though he, too, would like to have a share in the conversation, were he not so busy with his tea; as it was, he only nodded his head approvingly. He emptied glass after glass, growing warmer and more and more comfortable. The talk kept on in the one strain, all about the harm that comes from family division; clearly, no theoretical discussion, but concerned with a rupture in this very house, arising through the second son, who sat there in his place, morosely silent. The question was a painful one, and absorbed the whole family; but in politeness they refrained from discussing their private affairs before strangers. At last, however, the old man could endure no longer. In a tearful voice, he began to say that there should be no break-up of the family while he lived; that the house had much to thank God for, but if they fell apart—they must become beggars.

"Just like the Matvayeffs," said the village elder. "There was plenty among them all, but when they broke up the family, there was nothing for any of them."

"That's just what you want to do," said the old man to his son.

The son answered nothing, and there was a painful pause. Petrushka broke the silence, having by this time harnessed the horse and returned to the room, where he had been standing for a few minutes, smiling all the time.

"There is a tale in P'uls'n, just like this," said he. "A father gave his sons a besom to break. They could not break it while it was bound together, but they broke it easily by taking every switch by itself. That's the way here," he said, with his broad smile, "All's ready!" he added.

"Well, if we're ready, let us start," said Vasili Andreich. "As to this quarrel, don't you give in, grandfather. You got everything together, and you are the master. Apply to the magistrate; he will show you how to keep your authority."

"And he gives himself such airs, such airs," the old man continued to complain, appealingly. "There is no ordering him! It is as though Satan lived in him."

Meanwhile, Nikita, having drunk his fifth glass of tea,

did not stand it upside down, in sign that he had finished, but laid it by his side, hoping they might fill it a sixth time. But as the samovar had run dry, the hostess did not fill up for him again; and then Vasili Andreich began to put on his things. There was no help; Nikita, too, rose, put back his nibbled little cake of sugar into the sugar basin, wiped the moisture from his face with the skirt of his coat, and moved to put on his overcoat.

After getting into the garment, he sighed heavily; then, having thanked their hosts and said good-by, he went out from the warm, bright room, and through the dark, cold entrance hall, where the wind creaked the doors and drove the snow in at the chinks, into the dark yard. Petrushka, in his fur coat, stood in the center of the yard with the horse, and smiling as ever, recited a verse from "*P'uls'n*":

> "The storm covers the heaven with darkness,
> Whirling the driven snow,
> Now, howling like a wild beast,
> Now, crying like a child."[1]

Nikita nodded appreciatively, and arranged the reins.

The old man, coming out with Vasili Andreich, brought a lantern, wishing to show the way; but the wind put it out at once. Even in the enclosed yard, one could see that the storm had risen greatly.

"What weather!" thought Vasili Andreich. "I'm afraid we shall not get there. But it must be! Business! And then, I have put our friend to the trouble of harnessing his horse. God helping, we'll get there."

Their aged host also thought it better not to go; but he had offered his arguments already, and they had not been listened to. "Maybe it is old age makes me over-cautious; they will get there all right," thought he. "And we can all go to bed at proper time. It will be less bother."

Petrushka likewise saw danger in going, and felt uneasy; but he would not let anyone see it, and put on a bold front,

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[1] This is rendered in rude fashion by Petrushka, just as an English country laborer might quote a verse from Shelley. The Russian poem given in Paulsen is by Pushkin.

as though he had not a fear; the lines about "whirling the driven snow," encouraged him, because they were a quite true description of what was going on out in the street. As to Nikita, he had no wish to go at all; but he was long used to follow other people's wishes, and to give up his own. Therefore nobody withheld the travelers.

V

Vasili Andreich went over to the sledges, found them with some groping through the darkness, got in, and took the reins.

"Go ahead!" he shouted. Petrushka, kneeling in his sledge, started the horse. The dark bay, who had before been whinnying, aware of the mare's nearness, now dashed after her, and they drove out into the street. They rode once more through the village, down the same road, past the space where the frozen linen had hung, but hung no longer; past the same barn, now snowed-up almost as high as the roof, from which the snow flew incessantly; past the moaning, whistling and bending willows. And again they came to where the sea of snow raged from above and below. The wind had such power that, taking the travelers sideways when they were crossing its direction, it heeled the sledge over so that the horse was pushed aside. Petrushka drove his good mare in front, at an easy trot, giving her an occasional lively shout of encouragement. The dark bay pressed after her.

After driving thus for about ten minutes, Petrushka turned round and called out something. But neither Vasili Andreich nor Nikita could hear for the wind, but they guessed that they had reached the turning. In fact, Petrushka had turned to the right; the wind came in their front, and to the right, through the snow, loomed something black. It was the bush beside the turning.

"Well, good-by to you!"

"Thanks, Petrushka!"

"'The storm covers the heaven with darkness!'" shouted Petrushka, and disappeared.

"Quite a poet," said Vasili Andreich, and shook the reins.

"Yes, a fine young man, a genuine fellow," said Nikita.

They drove on. Nikita sank and pressed his head between his shoulders, so that his short beard covered up his throat. He sat silent, trying to keep the warmth which the tea had given him. Before him, he saw the straight lines of the shafts, which to his eyes looked like the ruts of the road; he saw the shifting quarters of the horse, with the knotted tail swayed in the wind; beyond, he saw the high bow between the shafts, and the horse's rocking head and neck, with the floating mane. From time to time he noticed waymarks, and knew that, thus far, they had kept right, and he need not concern himself.

Vasili Andreich drove on, trusting to the horse to keep to the road. But Moukhorta, although he had picked himself up a little in the village, went unwillingly, and seemed to shirk from the road, so that Vasili Andreich had to press him at times.

"Here is a waymark on the right, here's another, and there's a third," reckoned Vasili Andreich, "and here, in front, is the forest," he thought, examining a dark patch ahead. But that which he took for a forest was only a bush. They passed the bush, drove about fifty yards further, and there was neither the fourth waymark nor the forest.

"We must reach the forest soon," thought Vasili Andreich; and buoyed up by the vodka and the tea, he shook the reins. The good, obedient animal responded, and now at an amble, now at an easy trot, made in the direction he was sent, although he knew it was not the way in which he should have been going. Ten minutes went by, but no forest.

"I'm afraid we are astray again!" said Vasili Andreich, pulling up.

Nikita silently got out from the sledge, and holding with his hand the flaps of his coat, which pressed against him or flew from him as he stood and turned in the wind, began to tread the snow; first to one side, then to the other. About three times he went out of sight altogether. At last he returned, and took the reins from the hands of Vasili Andreich.

"We must go to the right," he said, sternly and peremptorily; and he turned the horse.

"Well, if it must be to the right, let us go to the right," said Vasili Andreich, passing over the reins and thrusting his hands into his sleeves. "I should be glad to be back at Grishkino, anyway," he said.

Nikita did not answer.

"Now then, old fellow, stir yourself," he called to the horse; but the latter, in spite of the shake of the reins, went on only slowly. In places the snow was knee-deep, and the sledge jerked at every movement of the horse.

Nikita took the whip, which hung in front of the sledge, and struck once. The good creature, unused to the lash, sprang forward at a trot, but soon fell again to a slow amble. Thus they went for five minutes. All was so dark, and so blurred with snow from above and below, that sometimes they could not make out the bow between the shafts. At times it seemed as though the sledge was standing, and the ground running back. Suddenly the horse stopped, feeling something wrong in front of him. Nikita once more lightly jumped out, throwing down the reins, and went in front to find out what was the matter. But hardly had he taken a pace clear ahead, when his feet slipped, and he fell down some steep place.

"Tpron,[1] tpron, tpron!" he said to himself, trying to stop his fall, and falling. There was nothing to seize hold of, and he only brought up when his feet plunged into a thick bed of snow which lay in the ravine. The fringe of snow which hung on the edge of the ravine, disturbed by Nikita's fall, showered upon him, and got into his coat collar.

"That's bad treatment!" said Nikita, reproaching the snow and the ravine, as he cleared out his coat collar.

"Mikit, ha, Mikit," shouted Vasili Andreich, from above. But Nikita did not answer. He was too much occupied in shaking away the snow, then in looking for the whip, which he lost in rolling down the bank. Having found the whip, he started to climb up the bank, but failed, rolling back every time; so that he was compelled to go along the foot of the bank to find a way up. About ten yards from the place where he fell, he managed to struggle up again, and turn back along the bank toward where the horse should have

[1] A cry answering to the English "Whoa!"

been. He could not see horse nor sledge; but by going over in the direction to which the wind was blowing, he heard the voices of Vasili Andreich and the whinny of Moukhorta calling him, before he saw them.

"I'm coming. Don't make a noise for nothing," he said.

Only when quite near the sledge could he make out the horse and Vasili Andreich, who stood close by, and looked gigantic.

"Where the devil have you got lost? We've got to drive back. We must get back to Grishkino anyway," the master began to rebuke him angrily.

"I should be glad to get there, Vasili Andreich, but how are we to do it? Here is a ravine where if we once get in, we shall never come out. I pitched in there in such a way that I could hardly get out."

"Well, assuredly we can't stay here; somewhere we must go," said Vasili Andreich.

Nikita made no answer. He sat down on the sledge with his back to the wind, took off his boots and emptied them of snow, then, with a little straw which he took from the sledge, he stopped from the inside a gap in the left boot.

Vasili Andreich was silent, as though leaving everything to Nikita alone. Having put on his boots, Nikita drew his feet into the sledge, took the reins and turned the horse along the ravine. But they had not driven a hundred paces when the horse stopped again. Another ditch confronted him.

Nikita got out again and began to explore the snow. He was afoot a long while. At last he reappeared on the side opposite to that from which he started.

"Vasili Andreich, are you alive?" he called.

"Here! What is the matter?"

"I can't make anything out, it is too dark; except some ditches. We must drive to windward again."

They set off once more; Nikita explored again, stumbling in the snow, or resting on the sledge; at last, falling down, he was out of breath, and stopped beside the sledge.

"How now?" asked Vasili Andreich.

"Well, I'm quite tired out. And the horse is done up."

"What are we to do?"

"Wait a minute." Nikita moved off again, and soon returned.

"Follow me," he said, going in front of the horse.

Vasili Andreich gave orders no more, but, implicitly did what Nikita told him.

"Here, this way," shouted Nikita, stepping quickly to the right. Seizing Moukhorta's head, he turned him toward a snow drift. At first the horse resisted; then dashed forward, hoping to leap the drift but failed, and sank in snow up to the hams.

"Get out!" called Nikita to Vasili Andreich, who still sat in the sledge; and taking hold of a shaft he began to push the sledge after the horse.

"It's a hard job, friend," he said to Moukhorta, "but it can't be helped. Stir yourself! Once more! Ah-oo-oo! Just a little!" he called out. The horse leaped forward, once, twice, but failed to clear himself, and sank again. He pricked his ears and sniffed at the snow, putting his head down to it as if thinking out something.

"Well, friend, this is no good," urged Nikita to Moukhorta. "A-ah, just a little more!" Nikita pulled on the shaft again; Vasili Andreich did the same on the opposite side. The horse lifted his head, and made a sudden dash.

"A-ah, a-ah, don't be afraid, you won't sink," shouted Nikita. One plunge, a second, a third, and at last the horse was out from the snow drift, and stood still, breathing heavily and shaking himself clear. Nikita wanted to lead him on further; but Vasili Andreich, in his two fur coats, had so lost his breath that he could walk no more, and dropped into the sledge.

"Let me get my breath a little," he said, unbinding the handkerchief which tied the collar of his coat.

"We are all right here, you might as well lie down," said Nikita. "I'll lead him along"; and with Vasili Andreich in the sledge, he led the horse by the head, about ten paces further, then up a slight rise, and stopped.

The place where Nikita drew up was not in a hollow, where the snow might gather, but was sheltered from the wind by rising ground. At moments, the wind, outside this protection, seemed to become quieter; but these intervals did not last long, and after them, the storm, as if to compensate

itself, rushed on with tenfold vigor, and tore and whirled the more. Such a gust of wind swept past as Vasili Andreich, with recovered breath, got out of the sledge and went up to Nikita, to talk over the situation. They both instinctively bowed themselves, and waited until the stress should be over. Moukhorta laid back his ears, and shook himself discontentedly. When the blast had abated a little, Nikita took off his mittens, stuck them in his girdle, and having breathed a little on his hands, began to undo the strap from the bow over the shafts.

"Why are you doing that?" asked Vasili Andreich.

"I'm taking out the horse. What else can we do? I'm done up," said Nikita, as though apologizing.

"But we could drive out to somewhere."

"No, we could not. We should only do harm to the horse. The poor beast is worn out," said Nikita, pointing to the creature, who stood there, waiting the next move, with heavily heaving sides. "We must put up for the night," he repeated, as though they were at their inn. He began to undo the collar straps, and detached the collar.

"But we shall be frozen?" queried Vasili Andreich.

"Well, if we are, we cannot help it," said Nikita.

VI

In his two fur coats, Vasili Andreich was quite warm; especially after the exertion in the snow drift. But a cold shiver ran down his back when he learned that they must stay where they were the night long. To calm himself, he sat down in the sledge, and got out his cigarettes and matches.

Meanwhile, Nikita continued to take out the horse. He undid the belly-band, took away the reins and collar strap, and laid the bow aside from the shafts; continuing to encourage Moukhorta by speaking to him.

"Now, come out, come out," he said, leading the horse clear of the shafts. "We must tie you here. I'll put a bit of straw for you, and take off your bridle," he went on, doing as he said. "After a bite, you'll feel ever so much better."

But Moukhorta was not calmed by Nikita's words; un-

easily, he shifted his feet, pressed against the sledge, turned his back to the wind, and rubbed his head on Nikita's sleeve.

As if not wholly to reject the treat of straw which Nikita put under his nose, Moukhorta just once seized a wisp out of the sledge, but quickly deciding that there was more important business than to eat straw, he threw it down again, and the wind instantly tore it away and hid it in the snow.

"Now we must make a signal," said Nikita, turning the front of the sledge against the wind; and having tied the shafts together with a strap, he set them on end in the front of the sledge. "If the snow covers us, the good folk will see the shafts, and dig us up," said Nikita. "That's what old hands advise."

Vasili Andreich had meanwhile opened his fur coat, and making a shelter with its folds, he rubbed match after match on the box. But his hands trembled, and the kindled matches were blown out by the wind, one after another, some when just struck, others when he thrust them to the cigarette. At last one match burned fully, and lighted up for a moment the fur of his coat, his hand with the gold ring on the bent forefinger, and the snow-sprinkled straw which stuck out from under the sacking. The cigarette took light. Twice he eagerly whiffed the smoke, drew it in, blew it through his moustaches, and would have gone on, but the wind tore away the burning tobacco. Even these few whiffs of tobacco smoke cheered up Vasili Andreich.

"Well, we will stop here," he said authoritatively.

Looking at the raised shafts, he thought to make a still better signal, and to give Nikita a lesson.

"Wait a minute, and I'll make a flag," he said, picking up the handkerchief which he had taken from round his collar and put down in the sledge. Drawing off his gloves, and reaching up, he tied the handkerchief tightly to the strap that held the shafts together. The handkerchief at once began to beat about wildly; now clinging round a shaft, now streaming out, and cracking like a whip.

"That's fine," said Vasili Andreich, pleased with his work, and getting into the sledge. "We should be warmer together, but there's not room for two," he said.

"I can find room," said Nikita, "but the horse must be covered; he's sweating, the good fellow. Excuse me," he

added, going to the sledge, and drawing the sacking from under Vasili Andreich. This he folded, and after taking off the saddle and breeching, covered the dark bay with it.

"Anyway, it will be a bit warmer, silly," he said, putting the saddle and heavy breeching over the sacking.

"Can you spare the rug? and give me a little straw?" said Nikita, after finishing with the horse.

Taking these from under Vasili Andreich, he went behind the sledge, dug there a hole in the snow, put in the straw, and pulling his hat over his eyes and covering himself with the rug, sat down on the straw, with his back against the bark matting of the back of the sledge, which kept off the wind and snow.

Vasili Andreich, seeing what Nikita was doing, shook his head disapprovingly, in the way he usually did over the signs of peasant-folk's ignorance and density; and he began to make arrangements for the night.

He smoothed the remaining straw, heaped it more thickly under his side, thrust his hands into his sleeves, and adjusted his head in the corner of the sledge in front, where he was sheltered from the wind. He did not wish to sleep. He lay down, and thought; about one thing only, which was the aim, reason, pleasure, and pride of his life; about the money he had made, and might make, the amount his neighbors had, and the means whereby they gained it and were gaining it; and how he, like them, could gain a great deal more.

"The oak can be sold for sledge-runners. And certainly the trees for building. And there are a hundred feet of firewood to the acre,"—so he estimated the forest, which he had seen in the autumn, and which he was going to buy. "But for all that, I won't pay ten thousand; say eight thousand; and besides, in allowing for the bare spaces, I'll oil the surveyor—a hundred roubles will do it—a hundred and fifty, if necessary, and get him to take about thirteen acres out of the forest. He is sure to sell for eight; three thousand down. Yes, sure; he will weaken at that," he thought, pressing his forearm on the pocketbook beneath. "And how we've got astray, God knows! The forest and the keeper's hut should be just by. I should like to hear the dogs, but they never bark when they're wanted, the cursed brutes."

He opened his collar a little, to look and listen; there was only the dark head of the horse, and his back, on which the sackcloth fluttered; there was only the same whistle of the wind, the flapping and cracking of the handkerchief on the shafts, and the lashing of the snow on the bark matting of the sledge. He covered himself again. "If one had only known this beforehand, we had better have stayed where we were. But no matter, to-morrow will be time enough. It is only a day later. In this weather, the other fellows won't dare to go." Then he remembered that on the 9th he had to receive the price of some cattle from the butcher. He wanted to do the business himself, for his wife had no experience, and was not competent in such matters. "She never knows what to do," he continued to reflect, remembering how she had failed in her behavior toward the commissary of police when he visited them yesterday at the feast. "Just a woman, of course. What has she ever seen? In my father's and mother's time, what sort of a house had we? Nothing out of the way; a well-to-do countryman's; a barn, and an inn, and that was the whole property. And now what a change I've made, these fifteen years! A general store, two taverns, a flour-mill, a stock of grain, two farms on rent, a house and warehouse all iron-roofed," he remembered proudly. "Not like in the old people's time! Who is known over the whole place? Brekhunov."

"And why is all this? Because I stick to business, I look after things; not like others, who idle, or waste their time in foolishness. I give up sleep at night. Storm or no storm, I go. And of course, the thing is done. They think money is made easily, by just playing. Not at all; it's work and trouble. They think luck makes men. Look at the Mironovs, who have their millions, now. Why? They worked. Then God gives. If God only grants us health!" And the idea that he, also, might become a millionaire like Mironov, who began with nothing, so excited Vasili Andreich that he suddenly felt a need to talk to some one. But there was nobody. If he could only have reached Goryachkino he might have talked with the landowner, and got round him.

"What a gale! It will snow us up so that we can't get out in the morning," he thought, listening to the sound of

the wind, which blew against the front of the sledge, and lashed the snow against the bark matting.

"And I did as Nikita said, all for nothing," he thought. "We ought to have driven on, and got to somewhere. We might have gone back to Grishkino and stayed at Tarass's. Now we must sit here all night. Well, what was I thinking about? Yes, that God gives to the industrious, and not to the lazy, loafers, and fools. It's time for a smoke, too." He sat up, got his cigarette case, and stretched himself flat on his stomach to protect the light from the wind with the flaps of his coat; but the wind got in and put out match after match. At last, he managed to get a cigarette lit. It began to burn, and the achievement of his object greatly delighted him. Although the wind had more of his cigarette than he himself, nevertheless he got about three puffs, and felt better. He again threw himself back in the sledge, wrapped himself up, and returned to his recollections and dreams; he fell asleep. But suddenly something pushed and awoke him. Was it the dark bay pulling the straw from under him, or some fancy of his own? At all events he awoke, and his heart began to beat so quickly and strongly that the sledge seemed to be shaking under him. He opened his eyes. Everything around was the same as before; but it seemed a shade brighter. "The morning," he thought, "it can't be far from morning." But he suddenly remembered that the light was only due to the rising of the moon. He lifted himself, and looked first at the horse. Moukhorta stood with his back to the wind, and shivered all over. The sacking, snow-covered and turned up at one corner; the breeching, which had slipped aside; the snowy head and fluttering mane; all was now more clearly visible. Vasili Andreich bent over the back of the sledge and looked behind. Nikita sat in his old position. The rug and his feet were covered with snow. "I'm afraid he will be frozen, his clothes are so bad. I might be held responsible. He is tired out, and has not much resisting power," reflected Vasili Andreich; and he thought of taking the sacking from the horse to put over Nikita; but it was cold to disturb himself, and besides, he did not want the horse frozen. "What was the use of bringing him? It is all her stupidity!" thought Vasili Andreich, remembering the unloved wife; and he turned again

to his former place in the front of the sledge. "My uncle once sat in snow all night, like this," he reflected, "and no harm came of it. And Sebastian also was dug out," he went on, remembering another case, "but he was dead, stiff like a frozen carcass."

"It would have been all right if we had stopped at Grishkino." Carefully covering himself, not to waste the warmth of the fur, and so as to protect his neck, knees and the soles of his feet, he shut his eyes, trying to sleep. But however much he tried, no sleep came; on the contrary, he felt alert and excited. He began again to count his gains and the debts due to him; again he began to boast to himself and to feel proud of himself and his position; but he was all the while disturbed by a lurking fear, and by the unpleasant reflection that he had not stopped at Grishkino. He changed his attitude several times; he lay down, and tried to find a better position, more sheltered from wind and snow, but failed; he rose again and changed his position, crossed his feet, shut his eyes and lay silent; but either his crossed feet, in their high felt boots, began to ache, or the wind blew in somewhere. Thus lying for a short time, he again began the disagreeable reflection, how comfortably he would have lain in the warm house at Grishkino. Again he rose, changed his position, wrapped himself up, and again lay down.

Once Vasili Andreich fancied he heard a distant cock-crow. He brightened up, and began to listen with all his might; but however he strained his ear, he heard nothing but the sound of the wind whistling against the shafts, and the snow lashing the bark matting of the sledge. Nikita had been motionless all the time, not even answering Vasili Andreich, who spoke to him twice.

"He doesn't worry; he seems to be asleep," Vasili Andreich thought, angrily, looking behind the sledge at the snow-covered Nikita.

Twenty times Vasili Andreich thus rose and lay down. It seemed to him this night would never end. "It must be near morning now," he thought once, rising and looking round him. "Let me see my watch. It is cold to unbutton oneself; but if I only knew it was near morning it would be better. Then we might begin to harness the horse." At the bottom of his mind, Vasili Andreich knew that the

dawn could be nowhere near; but he began to feel more and more afraid, and he chose both to deceive himself and to find himself out. He began cautiously to undo the hooks of the inside fur coat, then putting his hand in at the bosom he felt about until he got at the vest. With great trouble he drew out his silver, flower-enameled watch, and began to examine it. Without a light, he could make out nothing. Again he lay down flat, as when he lit the cigarette; got the matches, and began to strike. This time he was particularly careful, and selecting a match with most phosphorus on, at one attempt lit it. Lighting up the face of the watch, he could not believe his eyes. It was not later than ten minutes past twelve. The whole night was yet before him.

"O what a weary night!" thought Vasili Andreich, a cold shiver running down his back; and buttoning up again he hugged himself close in the corner of the sledge. Suddenly, through the monotonous wail of the wind, he distinctly heard a new and a living sound. It grew gradually louder, and became quite clear; then began to die away. There could be no doubt; it was a wolf. And this wolf's howl was so near, that down the wind one could hear how he changed his cry by the movement of his jaws. Vasili Andreich turned back his collar and listened attentively. Moukhorta listened likewise, pricking his ears, and when the wolf had ceased howling, he shifted his feet, and sniffed warningly. After this Vasili Andreich not only was unable to sleep, but even to keep calm. The more he tried to think of his accounts, of his business, reputation, importance, and property, more and more fear grew upon him; and above all his thoughts, one thought stood out predominantly and penetratingly: the thought of his rashness in not stopping at Grishkino.

"The forest—what do I care about the forest? There is plenty of business without that, thank God! Ah, why did I not stay the night?" said he to himself. "They say people who drink are soon frozen," he thought, "and I have had some drink." Then testing his own sensations, he felt that he began to shiver, not knowing whether from cold or fear. He tried to wrap himself up and to lie down, as before; but he could not. He was unable to rest, wanted

to rise, to do something to suppress his gathering fears, against which he felt helpless. Again he got his cigarettes and matches; but only three of the latter remained, and these were bad ones. All three rubbed away without lighting.

"To the devil, curse it, to—!" he broke out, himself not knowing why, and he threw away the cigarette, broken. He was about to throw away the match box, but stayed his hand, and thrust it in his pocket instead. He was so agitated that he could no longer remain in one place. He got out of the sledge, and standing with his back to the wind, set his girdle again, tightly, and low down.

"What is the use of lying down; it is only waiting for death; much better mount the horse and get away!" the thought suddenly flashed into his mind. "The horse will not stand still with some one on his back. He," thinking of Nikita, "must die any way. What sort of a life has he? He does not care much even about his life, but as for me—thank God, I have something to live for!"

Untying the horse from the sledge, he threw the reins over his neck, and tried to mount, but failed. Then he clambered on the sledge, and tried to mount from that; but the sledge tilted under his weight, and he failed again. At last, on a third attempt, he backed the horse to the sledge, and cautiously balancing on the edge, got his body across the horse. Lying thus for a moment, he pushed himself once, twice, and finally threw one leg over and seated himself, supporting his feet on the breeching in place of stirrups. The shaking of the sledge roused Nikita, and he got up; Vasili Andreich thought he was speaking.

"Listen to you, fool? What, must I die in this way, for nothing?" exclaimed Vasili Andreich. Tucking under his knees the loose skirts of his fur coat, he turned the horse round, and rode away from the sledge in the direction where he expected to find the forest and the keeper's hut.

VII

NIKITA had not stirred since, covered by the rug, he took his seat behind the sledge. Like all people who live with nature, and endure much, he was patient, and could

wait for hours, even days, without growing restless or irritated. When his master called to him, he heard, but made no answer, because he did not wish to stir. The thought that he might, and very likely must, die that night, came to him at the moment he was taking his seat behind the sledge. Although he still felt the warmth from the tea he had taken, and from the exercise of struggling through the snow drift, he knew the warmth would not last long, and that he could not warm himself again by moving about, for he was exhausted, and felt as a horse may, when it stops, and must have food before it can work again. Besides, his foot, the one in the torn boot, was numbed, and already he could not feel the great toe. And the cold began to creep all over his body.

The thought that he would die that night came upon him, seeming not very unpleasant, nor very awful. Not unpleasant, because his life had been no unbroken feast, but rather an incessant round of toil of which he began to weary. And not awful, because, beyond the masters whom he served here, like Vasili Andreich, he felt himself dependent upon the Great Master; upon Him who had sent him into this life. And he knew that even after death he must remain in the power of that Master; Who would not treat him badly. "Is it a pity to leave what you are practised in, and used to? Well, what's to be done? You must get used to fresh things as well."

"Sins?" he thought, and recollected his drunkenness, the money wasted in drink, his ill treatment of his wife, neglect of church and of the fasts, and all things for which the priest reprimanded him at the confessional. "Of course, these are sins. But then, did I bring them on me, myself? Whatever I am, I suppose God made me so. Well, and about these sins? How can one help it?"

So he thought, concerning what might happen to him that night, and having reached his conclusion, he gave himself up to the thoughts and recollections which ran through his mind of themselves. He remembered the visit of his wife, Martha; the drunkenness among the peasants, and his own abstinence from drink; the beginning of their journey; Tarass's house, and the talk about the break-up of the family; his own lad; Moukhorta, with the sacking over

him for warmth; and his master, rolling round in the sledge, and making it creak. "He is uneasy," thought Nikita, "most likely because a life like his makes one want not to die; different from people of my kind." And all these recollections and thoughts interwove and jumbled themselves in his brain, until he fell asleep.

When Vasili Andreich mounted the horse, he twisted aside the sledge, and the back of it slid away from behind Nikita, who was struck by one of the runner ends. Nikita awoke, thus compelled to move. Straightening his legs with difficulty, and throwing off the snow which covered them, he got up. Instantly an agony of cold penetrated his whole frame. On making out what was happening, he wanted Vasili Andreich to leave him the sacking that lay over the horse, which was no longer needed there; so that he might put it round himself. But Vasili Andreich did not wait, and disappeared in the midst of snow. Thus left alone, Nikita considered what he had better do. He felt unable to move off in search of some house; and it was already impossible for him to sit down in the place he had occupied, for it was already covered with snow; and he knew he could not get warm in the sledge, having nothing to cover him. He felt as cold as though he stood in his shirt; there seemed no warmth at all from his coat and overcoat. For a moment, he pondered; then sighed; and keeping the rug over his head, he threw himself into the sledge, in the place where his master had lain. He huddled himself up into the smallest space; but still got no warmth. Thus he lay for about five minutes, shivering through his whole body; then the shivering ceased, and he began to lose consciousness, little by little. Whether he was dying, or falling asleep, he knew not; but he was as ready for the one as for the other. If God should bid him get up again, still alive in the world; to go on with his laborer's life, to care for other men's horses, to carry other men's corn to the mill, to again start drinking and renouncing drink, to continue the money supply to his wife and that same cooper; to watch his lad growing up—well, so be His holy will. Should God bid him arise in another world, where all would be as fresh and bright as this world was in his young childhood, with the caresses of his mother, the games among the children, the fields,

forests, skating in winter—arise to a life quite out of the common—then, so be His holy will. And Nikita wholly lost consciousness.

VIII

During this while, Vasili Andreich guiding with his feet and the gathered reins, rode the horse in the direction where he, for some cause, expected to find the forest and the forester's hut. The snow blinded him, and the wind, it seemed, was bent on staying him; but with head bent forward, and continually pulling up his fur coat between him and the cold, nail-studded pad, on which he could not settle himself, he urged on the horse. The dark bay, though with difficulty, obediently ambled on in the direction to which he was turned.

For some minutes he rode on; as it seemed to him, in a straight line; seeing nothing but the horse's head and the white waste, and hearing only the whistling of the wind about the horse's ears and his own coat collar.

Suddenly a dark patch showed in front of him. His heart began to beat with joy, and he rode on toward the object, already seeing in it the house walls of a village. But the dark patch was not stationary, it moved. It was not a village, but a ridge, covered with tall mugwort, which rose up through the snow, and bent to one side under the force of the wind. The sight of the high grass, tormented by the pitiless wind, somehow made Vasili Andreich tremble, and he started to ride away hastily; not perceiving that in approaching the place, he had quite turned out of his first direction, and that now he was heading the opposite way. He was still confident that he rode toward where the forester's hut should be. But the horse seemed always to make toward the right, and Vasili Andreich had to guide it toward the left.

Again a dark patch appeared before him; again he rejoiced, believing that now surely he saw a village. But once more it was the ridge, covered with high grass, shaking ominously, and as before, frightening Vasili Andreich. But it was not the same ridge of grass, for near it was a horse-track, now disappearing in the snow. Vasili Andreich stopped, bent down, and looked carefully; a horse track, not

yet snow covered; it could only be the hoof prints of his own horse. He was evidently moving in a small circle. "And I am perishing in this way," he thought. To repress his terror, he urged on the horse, still more, peering into the mist of snow, in which he saw nothing but flitting and fitful points of light. Once he thought he heard either the barking of dogs or the howling of wolves, but the sounds were so faint and indistinct, that he could not be sure whether he had heard them, or imagined them; and he stopped to strain his ears and listen.

Suddenly a terrible, deafening cry beat upon his ears, and everything began to tremble and quake about him. Vasili Andreich seized the horse's neck, but that also shook, and the terrible cry rose still more frightfully. For some moments, Vasili Andreich was beside himself, and could not understand what had happened. It was only this: Moukhorta, whether to encourage himself or to call for help, had neighed, loudly and resonantly.

"The devil! How that cursed horse frightened me!" said Vasili Andreich to himself. But even when he understood the cause of his terror, he could not shake it off.

"I must bethink myself, steady myself," he went on, even while, unable to regain his self-control, he urged forward the horse without noting that he was now going with the wind, instead of against it. His body, especially where his fur coat did not protect it against the pad, was freezing; shivering and aching all over. He forgot all about the forester's hut, and desired one thing only; to get back to the sledge, that he might not perish alone, like that mugwort in the midst of the terrible waste of snow.

Without warning, the horse suddenly stumbled under him, caught in a snow drift; began to plunge, and fell on his side. Vasili Andreich jumped off, dragged down the breeching with his foot, and turned the pad round by holding to it as he jumped. As soon as he was clear, the horse righted itself, plunged forward one leap and then another, and neighing again, with the sacking and breeching trailed after him, disappeared; leaving Vasili Andreich alone in the snow drift. The latter pressed on after the horse, but the snow was so deep, and his fur coat so heavy, that, sinking over the knee at each step, he was out of breath after

not more than twenty paces, and stopped. "The forest, the sheep, the farms, the shop, the taverns," thought he, "how can I leave them? What is really the matter? This is impossible!" surged through his head. And he had a strange recollection of the wind shaken mugwort which he had ridden past twice, and such a terror seized him that he lost all sense of the reality of what was happening. He thought, "Is not this all a dream?"—and tried to wake himself. But there was no awakening. The snow was real, lashing his face and covering him; and it was a real desert in which he was now alone, like that mugwort, waiting for inevitable, speedy, and incomprehensible death.

"Queen in heaven, Nicholas the miracle doer, sustainer of the faithful!" He recalled yesterday's Te Deums; the shrine with the black image in a golden chasuble; the tapers which he sold for the shrine, and which, as they were at once returned to him, he used to put back in the store chest hardly touched by the flame. And he began to implore that same Nicholas—the miracle doer, to save him, vowing to the saint a Te Deum and tapers. But in some way, here, he clearly and without a doubt realized that the image, chasuble, tapers, priests, thanksgivings, and so forth, while very important and necessary in their place, in the church, were of no service to him now; and that between those tapers and Te Deums, and his own disastrous plight, there could be no possible relation.

"I must not give up; I must follow the horse's tracks, or they, too, will be snowed over," the thought struck him, and he made on. But despite his resolution to walk quietly, he found himself running, falling down every minute, rising and falling again. The hoof prints were already almost indistinguishable where the snow was shallow. "I am lost!" thought Vasili Andreich, "I shall lose this track as well!" But at that instant, casting a glance in front, he saw something dark. It was the horse, and not him alone, but the sledge, the shafts. Moukhorta, with the pad twisted round and the trailed breeching and sacking, was standing, not in his former place, but nearer to the shafts; and was shaking his head, drawn down by the reins beneath his feet. It appeared that Vasili Andreich had stuck in the same ravine into which they had, with Nikita, previously plunged;

that the horse had led him back to the sledge; and that he had dismounted at not more than fifty paces from the place where the sledge lay.

IX

When Vasili Andreich, with great difficulty, regained the sledge, he seized upon it, and stood motionless for a long time; trying to calm himself, and to take breath. Nikita was not in his old place, but something was lying in the sledge, something already covered with snow; and Vasili Andreich guessed it to be Nikita. His terror had now quite left him; if he felt any fear, it was lest that terror should return upon him in the way he had experienced it when on the horse, and especially when he was alone in the snow drift. By any and every means, he must keep away that terror; to do that, he must forget himself, think about something else; something must be done. Accordingly, the first thing he did was to turn his back to the wind and throw open his fur cloak. As soon as he felt a little refreshed, he shook out the snow from his boots and gloves, bound up his girdle again, tight and low down; as though making ready for work, as he did when going out to buy grain from the peasants' carts. The first step to take, it appeared to him, was to free the horse's legs. And he did this; then clearing the rein, he tied Moukhorta to the iron cramp in front of the sledge, as before, and walking round the horse's quarters, he adjusted the pad, breeching and sacking. But as he did this, he perceived a movement in the sledge; and Nikita's head rose out of the snow that was about it. With obvious great difficulty, the peasant rose and sat up; and in a strange fashion, as though he were driving away flies, waved his hand before his face, saying something which Vasili Andreich interpreted as a call to himself.

Vasili Andreich left the sack unadjusted, and went to the sledge.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked. "What are you saying?"

"I am dy-y-ing, that's what's the matter," said Nikita, brokenly, struggling for speech. "Give what I have earned to the lad. Or to the wife; it's all the same."

"What, are you really frozen?" asked Vasili Andreich.

"I can feel I've got my death. Forgiveness . . . for Christ's sake . . ." said Nikita, in a sobbing voice, continuing to wave his hand before his face, as if driving away flies.

Vasili Andreich stood for half a minute quiet and still; then suddenly, with the same resolution with which he used to strike hands over a good bargain, he took a step back, turned up the sleeves of his fur coat, and using both hands, began to rake the snow from off Nikita and the sledge. That done, Vasili Andreich quickly took off his girdle, made ready the fur coat, and moving Nikita with a push, he lay down on him, covering him not only with the fur coat, but with the full length of his own body, which glowed with warmth.

Adjusting with his hands the skirts of his coat, so as to come between Nikita and the bark-matting of the sledge, and tucking the tail of the coat between his knees, Vasili Andreich lay flat, with his head against the bark-matting in the sledge front. He no longer could hear, either the stirring of the horse or the wind's whistling; he had ears only for the breathing of Nikita. At first, and for a long time, Nikita lay without a sign; then he sighed deeply, and moved, evidently with returning warmth.

"Ah, there you are! And yet you say 'die.' Lie still, get warm, and we shall . . ." began Vasili Andreich. But to his own surprise, he could not speak: because his eyes were filled with tears, and his lower jaw began to quiver strongly. He said no more; only swallowed down the risings in his throat.

"I have been frightened, that is clear, and have lost my nerve," he thought of himself. But this weakness came not as an unpleasant sensation; rather as a notable, and hitherto unknown, delight.

"That's what we are!" he said to himself, with a strange, tender and tranquil sense of victory. He lay quiet for some time, wiping his eyes with the fur of his coat, and returning the right skirt under his knees, as the wind continually turned it up.

He felt a passionate desire to let some one else know of his happy condition.

"Nikita!" he said.

"It's comfortable," came an answer from below.

"So it is, friend! I was nearly lost. And you would have been frozen, and I should. . . ."

But here again his face began to quiver, and his eyes once more filled with tears; he could say no more.

"Well, never mind," he thought, "I know well enough myself, what I know," and he kept quiet.

Several times he looked at the horse, and saw that his back was uncovered, and the sacking and breeching were hanging down nearly to the snow. He ought to get up and cover the horse; but he could not bring himself to leave Nikita for even a moment, and so disturb that happy situation in which he felt himself; for he had no fear now.

Nikita warmed him from below, and the fur coat warmed him from above; but his hands, with which he held the coat skirts down on both sides of Nikita, and his feet, from which the wind continually lifted the coat, began to freeze. But he did not think of them. He thought only of how to restore the man who lay beneath him.

"No fear, he will not escape," he said to himself, as Nikita grew warmer; and he said this boastingly, in the way he used to speak of his buying and selling.

Then he lay for a long while. At first his thoughts were filled with impressions of the snow storm, the shafts of the sledge, the horse under the sledge bow, all jostling before his eyes; he recollected Nikita, lying under him; then upon these impressions rose others, of the feast, his wife, the commissary of police, the taper box; then again of Nikita, this time lying under the taper box. Then came apparitions of peasants at their trafficking, and white walls, and iron-roofed houses, with Nikita stretched out beneath; then all was confused, one thing running into another, like the colors in the rainbow, which blend into one whiteness, all the different impressions fused into one nothing; and he fell asleep. For a long time, he slept dreamlessly; but before daybreak dreams visited him again. He was once more standing beside the taper box, and Tikhon's wife asked him for a five-kopeck taper, for the feast; he wanted to take the taper and give it to her, but he could not move his hands, which hung down, thrust tightly into his pockets.

He wanted to walk round the box; but his feet would not move; his goloshes, new and shiny, had grown to the stone floor, and he could neither move them, nor take out his feet. All at once the box ceased to be a taper box, and turned into a bed; and Vasili Andreich saw himself lying, face downward, on the taper box, which was his own bed at home. Thus lying, he was unable to get up; and yet he must get up, because Ivan Matveich, the commissary of police, would soon call upon him, and with Ivan Matveich he must either bargain for the forest, or set the breeching right on Moukhorta. He asked his wife, "Well, has he not come?" "No," she said, "he has not." He heard some one drive up to the front door. It must be he. No, whoever it was, he has gone past. "Micolaevna, Micolaevna! what, has he not come yet?" No. And he lay on the bed, still unable to rise, and still waiting; a waiting that was painful, and yet pleasant. All at once, his joy was fulfilled; the expected one came; not Ivan Matveich, the commissary of police, but another; and yet the one for whom he had waited. He came, and called to him; and he that called was he who had bidden him lie down upon Nikita. Vasili Andreich was glad because that one had visited him. "I am coming," he cried, joyfully. And the cry awoke him.

He wakes; but wakes in quite another state than when he fell asleep. He wants to rise, and cannot; to move his arm, and cannot—his leg, and he cannot do that. He wants to turn his head, and cannot do even so much. He is surprised, but not at all disturbed by this. He divines that this is death; and is not at all disturbed even by that. And he remembers that Nikita is lying under him, and that he has got warm, and is alive; and it seems to him that he is Nikita, and Nikita is he; that his life is not in himself, but in Nikita. He makes an effort to listen, and hears the breathing, even the slight snoring of Nikita. "Nikita is alive, and therefore I also am alive!" he says to himself, triumphantly. And something quite new, such as he had never known in all his life, is stealing down upon him.

He remembers his money, the shop, the house, the buying and selling, the Mironovs' millions; and he really cannot understand why that man, called Vasili Brekhunov, had troubled with all those things with which he had troubled

himself. "Well, he did not know what it was all about," he thinks, concerning this Vasili Brekhunov. "He did not know, you see; but now, I do know. No mistake this time; *now I know.*" And again he hears the summons of that one who had before called him. "I am coming, I am coming," he says with his whole joy-thrilled being. And he feels himself free; with nothing to encumber him more. And nothing more, in this world, saw, heard, or felt Vasili Andreich.

Round about, all was as before. The same whirling snow, driving upon the fur coat of the dead Vasili Andreich, upon Moukhorta, whose whole body shivered, and upon the sledge, now hardly to be seen, with Nikita lying in the bottom of it, kept warm beneath his now dead master.

X

TOWARD daybreak, Nikita awoke. The cold roused him, again creeping along his back. He had dreamed that he was driving from the mill with a cart load of his master's flour, and that near Liapin's, in turning at the bridge end, he got the cart stuck. And he saw that he went beneath the cart, and lifted it with his back, adjusting his strength to it. But, wonderful!—the cart did not stir, it stuck to his back, so that he could neither lift nor get from under. It crushed his back. And how cold it was! He must get away somehow.

"That's enough," he cried to whoever, or whatever, it was that pressed his back with the cart. "Take the sacks out!" But the cart still pressed him, always colder and colder; and suddenly a peculiar knocking awoke him completely, and he remembered all. The cold cart—that was his dead and frozen master, lying upon him. The knocking was from Moukhorta, who struck twice on the sledge with his hoofs.

"Andreich, eh, Andreich!" says Nikita, inquiringly, straightening his back, and already guessing the truth. But Andreich does not answer, and his body and legs are hard, and cold, and heavy, like iron weights.

"He must have died. May his be the Kingdom of Heaven!" thinks Nikita. He turns his head, digs with his hand

through the snow about him, and opens his eyes. It is daylight. The wind still whistles through the shafts, and the snow is still falling; but with a difference, not lashing upon the bark-matting, as before, but silently covering the sledge and horse, ever deeper and deeper; and the horse's breathing and stirring are no more to be heard. "He must be frozen, too," thinks Nikita. And in fact, those hoof strokes upon the sledge were the last struggles of Moukhorta, by that time quite benumbed, to feel his legs.

"God, Father, it seems thou callest me as well," says Nikita to himself. "Let Thy holy will be done. But it is. . . . Still, one cannot die twice, and must die once. If it would only come quicker! . . ." And he draws in his arm again, shutting his eyes; and he loses consciousness, with the conviction that this time he is really going to die altogether.

About dinner time on the next day, the peasants with their shovels dug out Vasili Andreich and Nikita, only seventy yards from the road, and half a mile from the village. The wind had hidden the sledge in snow, but the shafts and the handkerchief were still visible. Moukhorta, over his belly in snow, with the breeching and sacking trailing from his back, stood all whitened, his dead head pressed in upon the apple of his throat; his nostrils were fringed with icicles; his eyes filled with rime, and frozen round as with tears. In that one night he had become so thin, that he was nothing but skin and bone. Vasili Andreich was stiffened like a frozen carcass, and he lay with his legs spread apart, just as he was when they rolled him off Nikita. His prominent hawk eyes were shriveled up, and his open mouth under his clipped mustache was filled with snow. But Nikita, though chilled through, was alive. When he was roused, he imagined he was already dead, and that the happenings about him were, by this time, not in this world, but in another. When he heard the shouts of the peasants, who were digging him out and rolling the frozen Vasili Andreich from him he was surprised, at first, to think that in the other world, also, peasants should be making noise. But when he understood that he was still here, in this world, he was rather sorry than glad; especially when he realized that the toes of both his feet were frozen.

Nikita lay in the hospital for two months. They cut off three toes from him, and the others recovered, so that he was able to work. For twenty years more, he went on living, first as a farm laborer, latterly as a watchman. He died at home, just as he wished, only this year; laid under the holy images, with a lighted taper in his hands. Before his death, he asked forgiveness from his old wife, and forgave her for the cooper; he took leave of his son and the grandchildren; and went away, truly pleased that, in dying, he released his son and daughter-in-law from the added burden of his keep, and that he himself was, this time really, going out of a life grown wearisome to him, into that other one which with every passing year had grown clearer and more desirable to him. Is he better off, or worse off, there, in the place where he awoke after that real death? Is he disappointed? Or has he found things there to be such as he expected? That, we shall all of us soon learn.

THE PIECE OF STRING[1]

(1884)

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT (1850–1893)

Born in Normandy Maupassant was thoroughly familiar with the Norman peasants in every relation of life. As some one says, he knows all their springs of action as if he had made them himself. Nothing escaped his observation, and his results show the theory that he lays down in "Sur l'Eau," when he defines the gift of the writer: "His eye is like a suction-pump absorbing everything; like a pickpocket's hands, always at work. Nothing escapes him. He is constantly collecting material, gathering up glances, gestures, intentions, everything that goes on in his presence—the slightest look, the least act, the merest trifle."

In the preface to "Pierre and Jean" he gives his view of his art again, and writing of his tutelage to Flaubert he describes the method by which he attained his famous accuracy of expression: "Having asserted that there are no two grains of sand in the world exactly alike, he made me describe some person or object in a way that particularized it clearly in a few brief sentences."

Again in the same preface he writes:

"Art consists in carefully prepared effects and skilfully disguised transitions, in the dexterity which throws

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[1] Reprinted from *Little French Masterpieces,* by permission of the publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

a high light on the essential events, giving to the rest the degree of relief suited to them."

On all the roads about Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the town, for it was market day. The men walked at an easy gait, the whole body thrown forward with every movement of their long, crooked legs, misshapen by hard work, by the bearing down on the plough which at the same time causes the left shoulder to rise and the figure to slant; by the mowing of the grain, which makes one hold his knees apart in order to obtain a firm footing; by all the slow and laborious tasks of the fields. Their starched blue blouses, glossy as if varnished, adorned at the neck and wrists with a bit of white stitchwork, puffed out about their bony chests like balloons on the point of taking flight, from which protruded a head, two arms, and two feet.

Some of them led a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And their wives, walking behind the beast, lashed it with a branch still covered with leaves, to hasten its pace. They carried on their arms great baskets, from which heads of chickens or of ducks were thrust forth. And they walked with a shorter and quicker step than their men, their stiff, lean figures wrapped in scanty shawls pinned over their flat breasts, their heads enveloped in a white linen cloth close to the hair, with a cap over all.

Then a *char-à-bancs* passed, drawn by a jerky-paced nag, with two men seated side by side shaking like jelly, and a woman behind, who clung to the side of the vehicle to lessen the rough jolting.

On the square at Goderville there was a crowd, a medley of men and beasts. The horns of the cattle, the high hats, with a long, hairy nap, of the wealthy peasants, and the head dresses of the peasant women, appeared on the surface of the throng. And the sharp, shrill, high-pitched voices formed an incessant, uncivilized uproar, over which soared at times a roar of laughter from the powerful chest of a sturdy yokel, or the prolonged bellow of a cow fastened to the wall of a house.

There was an all-pervading smell of the stable, of milk,

of the dunghill, of hay, and of perspiration—that acrid, disgusting odor of man and beast peculiar to country people.

Master Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was walking toward the square, when he saw a bit of string on the ground. Master Hauchecorne, economical like every true Norman, thought that it was well to pick up everything that might be of use; and he stooped painfully, for he suffered with rheumatism. He took the piece of slender cord from the ground, and was about to roll it up carefully, when he saw Master Malandain, the harness-maker, standing in his doorway and looking at him. They had formerly had trouble on the subject of a halter, and had remained at odds, being both inclined to bear malice. Master Hauchecorne felt a sort of shame at being seen thus by his enemy, fumbling in the mud for a bit of string. He hurriedly concealed his treasure in his blouse, then in his breeches pocket; then he pretended to look on the ground for something else, which he did not find; and finally he went on toward the market, his head thrust forward, bent double by his pains.

He lost himself at once in the slow-moving, shouting crowd, kept in a state of excitement by the interminable bargaining. The peasants felt of the cows, went away, returned, sorely perplexed, always afraid of being cheated, never daring to make up their minds, watching the vendor's eye, striving incessantly to detect the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, took out their fowls, which lay on the ground, their legs tied together, with frightened eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to offers, adhered to their prices, short of speech and impassive of face; or else, suddenly deciding to accept the lower price offered, they would call out to the customer as he walked slowly away:

"All right, Mast' Anthime. You can have it."

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus struck midday those who lived too far away to go home betook themselves to the various inns.

At Jourdain's the common room was full of customers, as the great yard was full of vehicles of every sort—carts, cabriolets, *chars-à-bancs,* tilburys, unnamable carriages,

shapeless, patched, with their shafts reaching heavenward like arms, or with their noses in the ground and their tails in the air.

The vast fireplace, full of clear flame, cast an intense heat against the backs of the row on the right of the table. Three spits were revolving, laden with chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton; and a delectable odor of roast meat, and of gravy dripping from the browned skin, came forth from the hearth, stirred the guests to merriment, and made their mouths water.

All the aristocracy of the plough ate there, at Mast' Jourdain's, the inn keeper and horse trader—a shrewd rascal who had money.

The dishes passed and were soon emptied, like the jugs of yellow cider. Everyone told of his affairs, his sales, and his purchases. They inquired about the crops. The weather was good for green stuffs, but a little wet for wheat.

Suddenly a drum rolled in the yard, in front of the house. In an instant everybody was on his feet, save a few indifferent ones; and they all ran to the door and windows, with their mouths still full and napkins in hand.

Having finished his long tattoo, the public crier shouted in a jerky voice, making his pauses in the wrong places:

"The people of Goderville, and all those present at the market are informed that between—nine and ten o'clock this morning on the Beuzeville—road, a black leather wallet was lost, containing five hundred—francs, and business papers. The finder is requested to carry it to—the mayor's office at once, or to Master Fortuné Houlbrèque of Manneville. A reward of twenty francs will be paid."

Then he went away. They heard once more in the distance the muffled roll of the drum and the indistinct voice of the crier.

Then they began to talk about the incident, reckoning Master Houlbrèque's chance of finding or not finding his wallet.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared in the doorway.

He inquired:

"Is Master Hauchecorne of Bréauté here?"

Master Hauchecorne, who was seated at the farther end of the table, answered:

"Here I am."

And the corporal added:

"Master Hauchecorne, will you be kind enough to go to the mayor's office with me? Monsieur the mayor would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, drank his *petit verre* at one swallow, rose, and even more bent than in the morning, for the first steps after each rest were particularly painful, he started off, repeating:

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the brigadier.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an arm-chair. He was the local notary, a stout, solemn-faced man, given to pompous speeches.

"Master Hauchecorne," he said, "you were seen this morning, on the Beuzeville road, to pick up the wallet lost by Master Houlbrèque of Manneville."

The rustic, dumfounded, stared at the mayor, already alarmed by this suspicion which had fallen upon him, although he failed to understand it.

"I, I—I picked up that wallet?"

"Yes, you."

"On my word of honor, I didn't even so much as see it."

"You were seen."

"They saw me, me? Who was it saw me?"

"Monsieur Malandain, the harness maker."

Thereupon the old man remembered and understood; and flushing with anger, he cried:

"Ah! he saw me, did he, that sneak? He saw me pick up this string, look, m'sieu' mayor."

And fumbling in the depths of his pocket, he produced the little piece of cord.

But the mayor was incredulous and shook his head.

"You won't make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man deserving of credit, mistook this string for a wallet."

The peasant, in a rage, raised his hand, spit to one side to pledge his honor, and said:

"It's God's own truth, the sacred truth, all the same,

m'sieu, mayor. I say it again, by my soul and my salvation."

"After picking it up," rejoined the mayor, "you hunted a long while in the mud, to see if some piece of money hadn't fallen out."

The good man was suffocated with wrath and fear.

"If anyone can tell—if anyone can tell lies like that, to ruin an honest man! If anyone can say——"

To no purpose did he protest; he was not believed.

He was confronted with Monsieur Malandain, who repeated and maintained his declaration. They insulted each other for a whole hour. At his own request, Master Hauchecorne was searched. They found nothing on him. At last the mayor, being sorely perplexed, discharged him, but warned him that he proposed to inform the prosecuting attorney's office and to ask for orders.

The news had spread. On leaving the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded and questioned with serious or bantering curiosity, in which, however, there was no trace of indignation. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He went his way, stopping his acquaintances, repeating again and again his story and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out, to prove that he had nothing.

They said to him:

"You old rogue, *va!*"

And he lost his temper, lashing himself into a rage, feverish with excitement, desperate because he was not believed, at a loss what to do, and still telling his story.

Night came. He must needs go home. He started with three neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of string: and all the way he talked of his misadventure.

During the evening he made the circuit of the village of Bréauté, in order to tell everybody about it. He found none but incredulous listeners.

He was ill over it all night.

The next afternoon, about one o'clock, Marius Paumelle, a farmhand employed by Master Breton, a farmer of Ymauville, restored the wallet and its contents to Master Houlbrèque of Manneville.

The man claimed that he had found it on the road; but, being unable to read, he had carried it home and given it to his employer.

The news soon became known in the neighborhood; Master Hauchecorne was informed of it. He started out again at once, and began to tell his story, now made complete by the dénouement. He was triumphant.

"What made me feel bad," he said, "wasn't so much the thing itself, you understand, but the lying. There's nothing hurts you so much as being blamed for lying."

All day long he talked of his adventure; he told it on the roads to people who passed; at the wine-shop to people who were drinking; and after church on the following Sunday. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. His mind was at rest now, and yet something embarrassed him, although he could not say just what it was. People seemed to laugh while they listened to him. They did not seem convinced. He felt as if remarks were made behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week, he went to market at Goderville, impelled solely by the longing to tell his story.

Malandain, standing in his doorway, began to laugh when he saw him coming. Why?

He accosted a farmer from Criquetot, who did not let him finish, but poked him in the pit of his stomach, and shouted in his face: "Go on, you old fox!" Then he turned on his heel.

Master Hauchecorne was speechless, and more and more disturbed. Why did he call him "old fox"?

When he was seated at the table, in Jourdain's Inn, he set about explaining the affair once more.

A horse-trader from Montivilliers called out to him:

"Nonsense, nonsense, you old dodger! I know all about your string!"

"But they've found the wallet!" faltered Hauchecorne.

"None of that, old boy; there's one who finds it, and there's one who carries it back. I don't know just how you did it, but I understand you."

The peasant was fairly stunned. He understood at last. He was accused of having sent the wallet back by a confederate, an accomplice,

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh..

He could not finish his dinner, but left the inn amid a chorus of jeers.

He returned home, shamefaced and indignant, suffocated by wrath, by confusion, and all the more cast down because, with his Norman cunning, he was quite capable of doing the thing with which he was charged, and even of boasting of it as a shrewd trick. He had a confused idea that his innocence was impossible to establish, his craftiness being so well known. And he was cut to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Thereupon he began once more to tell of the adventure, making the story longer each day, adding each time new arguments, more forcible protestations, more solemn oaths, which he devised and prepared in his hours of solitude, his mind being wholly engrossed by the story of the string. The more complicated his defense and the more subtle his reasoning, the less he was believed.

"Those are a liar's reasons," people said behind his back.

He realized it; he gnawed his nails, and exhausted himself in vain efforts.

He grew perceptibly thinner.

Now the jokers asked him to tell the story of "The Piece of String" for their amusement, as a soldier who has seen service is asked to tell about his battles. His mind, attacked at its source, grew feebler.

Late in December he took to his bed.

In the first days of January he died, and in the delirium of the death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

"A little piece of string—a little piece of string—see, here it is, m'sieu' mayor."

THE MERRY MEN[1]

(1883)

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850–1894)

Sidney Colvier writes that at Pitlochry, 1881, Stevenson was for a while able to enjoy life and to work well, writing two of the strongest of his short stories of Scottish life and superstition, "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men."

"And now, *mon bon*," writing to Henley, Stevenson himself says, "I must babble about 'The Merry Men,' my favorite work. It is a fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks. . . ." "My uncle himself is not the story as I see it, only the leading episode of that story. It is really a story of wrecks, as they appear to the dweller on the coast. It's a view of the sea."

Writing again to Henley in 1883: "The Required Play is in 'The Merry Men.'—Q. E. F. I thus render honor to your *flair:* it came on me of a clap: I do not see it yet, beyond a kind of sunset glory. But it's there: passion, romance, the picturesque, involved: startling, simple, horrid: a sea-pink in sea-froth! *S'agit de la desenterrer.* 'Help!' cries a buried masterpiece."

The glimpses of Stevenson's methods of work and bursts of inspiration running through all his letters are most interesting to the student of the art of composition. One wish of his is noteworthy as one considers the condensation of his work. "There is but one art—to omit!

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[1] Reprinted from the edition of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Oh, if I knew how to omit I would ask no other knowledge"

CHAPTER I

EILEAN AROS

It was a beautiful morning in the late July when I set forth on foot for the last time for Aros. A boat had put me ashore the night before at Grisapol; I had such breakfast as the little inn afforded, and, leaving all my baggage till I had an occasion to come round for it by sea, struck right across the promontory with a cheerful heart.

I was far from being a native of these parts, springing, as I did, from an unmixed lowland stock. But an uncle of mine, Gordon Darnaway, after a poor, rough youth, and some years at sea, had married a young wife in the islands; Mary Maclean she was called, the last of her family; and when she died in giving birth to a daughter, Aros, the sea-girt farm had remained in his possession. It brought him in nothing but the means of life, as I was well aware; but he was a man whom ill-fortune had pursued; he feared, cumbered as he was with the young child, to make a fresh adventure upon life; and remained in Aros, biting his nails at destiny. Years passed over his head in that isolation, and brought neither help nor contentment. Meantime our family was dying out in the lowlands; there is little luck for any of that race; and perhaps my father was the luckiest of all, for not only was he one of the last to die, but he left a son to his name and a little money to support it. I was a student of Edinburgh University, living well enough at my own charges, but without kith or kin; when some news of me found its way to Uncle Gordon on the Ross of Grisapol; and he, as he was a man who held blood thicker than water, wrote to me the day he heard of my existence, and taught me to count Aros as my home. Thus it was that I came to spend my vacations in that part of the country, so far from all society and comfort, between the cod-fish and the moorcocks; and thus it was that now, when I

had done with my classes, I was returning thither with so light a heart that July day.

The Ross, as we call it, is a promontory neither wide nor high, but as rough as God made it to this day; the deep sea on either hand of it, full of rugged isles and reefs most perilous to seamen—all overlooked from the eastward by some very high cliffs and the great peak of Ben Kyaw. *The Mountain of the Mist,* they say the words signify in the Gaelic tongue; and it is well named. For that hill-top, which is more than three thousand feet in height, catches all the clouds that come blowing from the seaward; and, indeed, I used often to think that it must make them for itself; since when all heaven was clear to the sea level, there would ever be a streamer on Ben Kyaw. It brought water, too, and was mossy[1] to the top in consequence. I have seen us sitting in broad sunshine on the Ross, and the rain falling black like crape upon the mountain. But the wetness of it made it often appear more beautiful to my eyes; for when the sun struck upon the hill sides, there were many wet rocks and watercourses that shone like jewels even as far as Aros, fifteen miles away.

The road that I followed was a cattle-track. It twisted so as nearly to double the length of my journey; it went over rough boulders so that a man had to leap from one to another, and through soft bottoms where the moss came nearly to the knee. There was no cultivation anywhere, and not one house in the ten miles from Grisapol to Aros. Houses of course there were—three at least; but they lay so far on the one side or the other that no stranger could have found them from the track. A large part of the Ross is covered with big granite rocks, some of them larger than a two-roomed house, one beside another, with fern and deep heather in between them where the vipers breed. Anyway the wind was, it was always sea air, as salt as on a ship; the gulls were as free as moorfowl over all the Ross; and whenever the way rose a little, your eye would kindle with the brightness of the sea. From the very midst of the land, on a day of wind and a high spring, I have heard the Roost roaring like a battle where it runs by Aros, and

[1] Boggy.

the great and fearful voices of the breakers that we call the Merry Men.

Aros itself—Aros Jay, I have heard the natives call it, and they say it means *the House of God*—Aros itself was not properly a piece of the Ross, nor was it quite an islet. It formed the southwest corner of the land, fitted close to it, and was in one place only separated from the coast by a little gut of the sea, not forty feet across the narrowest. When the tide was full, this was clear and still, like a pool on a land river; only there was a difference in the weeds and fishes, and the water itself was green instead of brown; but when the tide went out, in the bottom of the ebb, there was a day or two in every month when you could pass dry-shod from Aros to the mainland. There was some good pasture, where my uncle fed the sheep he lived on; perhaps the feed was better because the ground rose higher on the islet than the main level of the Ross, but this I am not skilled enough to settle. The house was a good one for that country, two stories high. It looked westward over a bay, with a pier hard by for a boat, and from the door you could watch the vapors blowing on Ben Kyaw.

On all this part of the coast, and especially near Aros, these great granite rocks that I have spoken of go down together in troops into the sea, like cattle on a summer's day. There they stand, for all the world like their neighbors ashore; only the salt water sobbing between them instead of the quiet earth, and clots of sea pink blooming on their sides instead of heather; and the great sea conger to wreathe about the base of them instead of the poisonous viper of the land. On calm days you can go wandering between them in a boat for hours, echoes following you about the labyrinth; but when the sea is up, Heaven help the man that hears that cauldron boiling.

Off the southwest end of Aros these blocks are very many, and much greater in size. Indeed, they must grow monstrously bigger out to sea, for there must be ten sea miles of open water sown with them as thick as a country place with houses, some standing thirty feet above the tides, some covered, but all perilous to ships; so that on a clear, westerly blowing day, I have counted, from the top of Aros, the great rollers breaking white and heavy over as

many as six-and-forty buried reefs. But it is nearer in shore that the danger is worst; for the tide, here running like a mill race, makes a long belt of broken water—a *Roost* we call it—at the tail of the land. I have often been out there in a dead calm at the slack of the tide; and a strange place it is, with the sea swirling and combing up and boiling like the cauldrons of a linn, and now and again a little dancing mutter of sound as though the *Roost* were talking to itself. But when the tide begins to run again, and above all in heavy weather, there is no man could take a boat within half a mile of it, nor a ship afloat that could either steer or live in such a place. You can hear the roaring of it six miles away. At the seaward end there comes the strongest of the bubble; and it's here that these big breakers dance together—the dance of death, it may be called—that have got the name, in these parts, of the Merry Men. I have heard it said that they run fifty feet high; but that must be the green water only, for the spray runs twice as high as that. Whether they got the name from their movements, which are swift and antic, or from the shouting they make about the turn of the tide, so that all Aros shakes with it, is more than I can tell.

The truth is, that in a southwesterly wind, that part of our archipelago is no better than a trap. If a ship got through the reefs, and weathered the Merry Men, it would be to come ashore on the south coast of Aros, in Sandag Bay, where so many dismal things befell our family, as I propose to tell. The thought of all these dangers, in the place I knew so long, makes me particularly welcome the works now going forward to set lights upon the headlands and buoys along the channels of our iron bound, inhospitable islands.

The country people had many a story about Aros, as I used to hear from my uncle's man, Rorie, an old servant of the Macleans, who had transferred his services without afterthought on the occasion of the marriage. There was some tale of an unlucky creature, a sea kelpie, that dwelt and did business in some fearful manner of his own among the boiling breakers of the *Roost*. A mermaid had once met a piper on Sandag Beach, and there sang to him a long, bright midsummer's night, so that in the morning he

was found stricken crazy, and from thenceforward, till the day he died, said only one form of words; what they were in the original Gaelic I cannot tell, but they were thus translated: "Ah, the sweet singing out of the sea." Seals that haunted on that coast have been known to speak to man in his own tongue, presaging great disasters. It was here that a certain saint first landed on his voyage out of Ireland to convert the Hebrideans. And, indeed, I think he had some claim to be called saint; for, with the boats of that past age, to make so rough a passage, and land on such a ticklish coast, was surely not far short of the miraculous. It was to him, or to some of his monkish underlings who had a cell there, that the islet owes its holy and beautiful name, the House of God.

Among these old wives' stories there was one which I was inclined to hear with more credulity. As I was told, in that tempest which scattered the ships of the Invincible Armada over all the north and west of Scotland, one great vessel came ashore on Aros, and before the eyes of some solitary people on a hill top, went down in a moment with all hands, her colors flying even as she sank. There was some likelihood in this tale; for another of that fleet lay sunk on the north side, twenty miles from Grisapol. It was told, I thought, with more detail and gravity than its companion stories, and there was one particularity which went far to convince me of its truth: the name, that is, of the ship was still remembered, and sounded, in my ears Spanishly. The *Espirito Santo* they called it, a great ship of many decks of guns, laden with treasure and grandees of Spain, and fierce soldadoes, that now lay fathom deep to all eternity, done with her wars and voyages, in Sandag Bay, upon the west of Aros. No more salvos of ordnance for that tall ship, the *Holy Spirit,* no more fair winds or happy ventures; only to rot there deep in the sea-tangle and hear the shoutings of the Merry Men as the tide ran high about the island. It was a strange thought to me first and last, and only grew stranger as I learned the more of the way in which she had set sail with so proud a company, and King Philip, the wealthy king, that sent her on that voyage.

And now I must tell you, as I walked from Grisapol that

day, the *Espirito Santo* was very much in my reflections. I had been favorably remarked by our then Principal in Edinburgh College, that famous writer, Dr. Robertson, and by him had been set to work on some papers of an ancient date to rearrange and sift of what was worthless; and in one of these, to my great wonder, I found a note of this very ship, the *Espirito Santo,* with her captain's name, and how she carried a great part of the Spaniard's treasure, and had been lost upon the Ross of Grisapol; but in what particular spot, the wild tribes of that place and period would give no information to the king's inquiries. .Putting one thing with another, and taking our island tradition together with this note of old King Jamie's perquisitions after wealth, it had come strongly on my mind that the spot for which he sought in vain could be no other than the small bay of Sandag on my uncle's land; and being a fellow of a mechanical turn, I had ever since been plotting how to weigh that good ship up again with all her ingots, ounces, and doubloons, and bring back our house of Darnaway to its long-forgotten dignity and wealth.

This was a design of which I soon had reason to repent. My mind was sharply turned on different reflections; and since I became the witness of a strange judgment of God's, the thought of dead men's treasures has been intolerable to my conscience. But even at that time I must acquit myself of sordid greed; for if I desired riches, it was not for their own sake, but for the sake of a person who was dear to my heart—my uncle's daughter, Mary Ellen. She had been educated well, and had been a time to school upon the mainland; which, poor girl, she would have been happier without. For Aros was no place for her, with old Rorie the servant, and her father, who was one of the unhappiest men in Scotland, plainly bred up in a country place among Cameronians, long a skipper sailing out of the Clyde about the islands, and now, with infinite discontent, managing his sheep and a little 'long shore fishing for the necessary bread. If it was sometimes weariful to me, who was there but a month or two, you may fancy what it was to her who dwelt in that same desert all the year round, with the sheep and flying sea gulls, and the Merry Men singing and dancing in the *Roost!*

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE WRECK HAD BROUGHT TO AROS

It was half flood when I got the length of Aros; and there was nothing for it but to stand on the far shore and whistle for Rorie with the boat. I had no need to repeat the signal. At the first sound, Mary was at the door flying a handkerchief by way of answer, and the old long-legged serving-man was shambling down the gravel to the pier. For all his hurry, it took him a long while to pull across the bay; and I observed him several times to pause, go into the stern, and look over curiously into the wake. As he came nearer, he seemed to me aged and haggard, and I thought he avoided my eye. The coble had been repaired, with two new thwarts and several patches of some rare and beautiful foreign wood, the name of it unknown to me.

"Why, Rorie," said I, as we began the return voyage, "this is fine wood. How came you by that?"

"It will be hard to cheesel," Rorie opined reluctantly; and just then, dropping the oars, he made another of those dives into the stern which I had remarked as he came across to fetch me, and, leaning his hand on my shoulder, stared with an awful look into the waters of the bay.

"What is wrong?" I asked, a good deal startled.

"It will be a great feesh," said the old man, returning to his oars; and nothing more could I get out of him, but strange glances and an ominous nodding of the head. In spite of myself, I was infected with a measure of uneasiness; I turned also, and studied the wake. The water was still and transparent, but, out here in the middle of the bay, exceeding deep. For some time I could see naught; but at last it did seem to me as if something dark—a great fish, or perhaps only a shadow—followed studiously in the track of the moving coble. And then I remembered one of Rorie's superstitions: how in a ferry in Morven, in some great, exterminating feud among the clans, a fish, the like of it unknown in all our waters, followed for some years the passage of the ferry boat, until no man dared to make the crossing.

"He will be waiting for the right man," said Rorie.

Mary met me on the beach, and led me up the brae and into the house of Aros. Outside and inside there were many changes. The garden was fenced with the same wood that I had noted in the boat; there were chairs in the kitchen covered with strange brocade; curtains of brocade hung from the window; a clock stood silent on the dresser; a lamp of brass was swinging from the roof; the table was set for dinner with the finest of linen and silver; and all these new riches were displayed in the plain old kitchen that I knew so well, with the high-backed settle, and the stools, and the closet bed for Rorie; with the wide chimney the sun shone into, and the clear-smouldering peats; with the pipes on the mantelshelf and the three-cornered spittoons, filled with sea shells instead of sand, on the floor; with the bare stone walls and the bare wooden floor, and the three patchwork rugs that were of yore its sole adornment—poor man's patchwork, the like of it unknown in cities, woven with homespun, and Sunday black, and sea cloth polished on the bench of rowing. The room, like the house, had been a sort of wonder in that country side, it was so neat and habitable; and to see it now, shamed by these incongruous additions, filled me with indignation and a kind of anger. In view of the errand I had come upon to Aros, the feeling was baseless and unjust; but it burned high, at the first moment, in my heart.

"Mary, girl," said I, "this is the place I had learned to call my home, and I do not know it."

"It is my home by nature, not by the learning," she replied; "the place I was born and the place I'm like to die in; and I neither like these changes, nor the way they came, nor that which came with them. I would have liked better, under God's pleasure, they had gone down into the sea, and the Merry Men were dancing on them now."

Mary was always serious; it was perhaps the only trait that she shared with her father; but the tone with which she uttered these words was even graver than of custom.

"Ay," said I, "I feared it came by wreck, and that's by death; yet when my father died, I took his goods without remorse."

"Your father died a clean strae death, as the folk say," said Mary.

"True," I returned; "and a wreck is like a judgment. What was she called?"

"They ca'd her the *Christ-Anna,*" said a voice behind me; and, turning round, I saw my uncle standing in the doorway.

He was a sour, small, bilious man, with a long face and very dark eyes; fifty-six years old, sound and active in body, and with an air somewhat between that of a shepherd and that of a man following the sea. He never laughed, that I heard; read long at the Bible; prayed much, like the Cameronians he had been brought up among; and indeed, in many ways, used to remind me of one of the hill preachers in the killing times before the Revolution. But he never got much comfort, nor even, as I used to think, much guidance, by his piety. He had his black fits when he was afraid of hell; but he had led a rough life, to which he would look back with envy, and was still a rough, cold, gloomy man.

As he came in at the door out of the sunlight, with his bonnet on his head and a pipe hanging in his button hole, he seemed, like Rorie, to have grown older and paler, the lines were deeplier ploughed upon his face, and the whites of his eyes were yellow, like old stained ivory, or the bones of the dead.

"Ay," he repeated, dwelling upon the first part of the word, "the *Christ-Anna.* It's an awfu' name."

I made him my salutations, and complimented him upon his look of health; for I feared he had perhaps been ill.

"I'm in the body," he replied, ungraciously enough; "ay in the body and the sins of the body, like yoursel'. Denner," he said abruptly to Mary, and then ran on to me: "They're grand braws, thir that we hae gotten, are they no? Yon's a bonny knock,[1] but it'll no gang; and the napery's by ordnar. Bonny, bairnly braws; it's for the like o' them folk sells the peace of God that passeth understanding; it's for the like o' them, an' maybe no even sae muckle worth, folk daunt on God to His face and burn in muckle hell; and it's for that reason the Scripture ca's them, as I read the passage, the accursed thing. Mary, ye girzie," he

[1] Clock.

interrupted himself to cry with some asperity, "what for hae ye no put out the twa candlesticks?"

"Why should we need them at high noon?" she asked.

But my uncle was not to be turned from his idea. "We'll bruik[1] them while we may," he said; and so two massive candlesticks of wrought silver were added to the table equipage, already so unsuited to that rough seaside farm.

"She cam' ashore Februar' 10, about ten at nicht," he went on to me. "There was nae wind, and a sair run o' sea; and she was in the sook o' the *Roost,* as I jaloose. We had seen her a' day, Rorie and me, beating to the wind. She was nae a handy craft, I'm thinking, that *Christ-Anna;* for she would neither steer nor stey wi' them. A sair day they had of it; their hands was never aff the sheets, and it perishin' cauld—ower cauld to snaw; and ay they would get a bit nip o' wind, and awa' again, to pit the emp'y hope into them. Eh, man! but they had a sair day for the last o't! He would have had a prood, prood heart that won ashore upon the back o' that."

"And were all lost?" I cried. "God help them!"

"Wheesht!" he said sternly. "Nane shall pray for the deid on my hearth stane."

I disclaimed a Popish sense for my ejaculation; and he seemed to accept my disclaimer with unusual facility, and ran on once more upon what had evidently become a favorite subject.

"We fand her in Sandag Bay, Rorie an' me, and a' thae braws in the inside of her. There's a kittle bit, ye see, about Sandag; whiles the sook rins strong for the Merry Men; an' whiles again, when the tide's makin' hard an' ye can hear the *Roost* blawin' at the far end of Aros, there comes a back spang of current straucht into Sandag Bay. Weel, there's the thing that got the grip on the *Christ-Anna.* She but to have come in ramstam an' stern forrit; for the bows of her are aften under, and the back side of her is clear at hie water o' neaps. But, man! the dunt that she cam doon wi' when she struck! Lord save us a'! but it's an unco life to be a sailor—a cauld, wanchancy life. Mony's the gliff I got mysel' in the great deep; and why

[1] Enjoy.

the Lord should hae made yon unco water is mair than ever I could win to understand. He made the vales and the pastures, the bonny green yaird, the halesome, canty land—

"And now they shout and sing to Thee,
For Thou hast made them glad,"

as the Psalms say in the metrical version. No that I would preen my faith to that clink neither; but it's bonny, and easier to mind. "Who go to sea in ships," they hae't again—

"And in
Great waters trading be,
Within the deep these men God's works
And His great wonders see."

Weel, it's easy sayin' sae. Maybe Dauvit wasnae very weel acquant wi' the sea. But troth, if it wasnae prentit in the Bible, I wad whiles be temp'it to think it wasnae the Lord, but the muckle, black deil that made the sea. There's naething good comes oot o't but the fish; an' the spentacle o' God riding on the tempest, to be shure, whilk would be what Dauvit was likely ettling at. But, man, they were sair wonders that God showed to the *Christ-Anna*—wonders, do I ca' them? Judgments, rather: judgments in the mirk nicht among the draygons o' the deep. And their souls—to think o' that—their souls, man, maybe no prepared! The sea—a muckle yett to hell!"

I observed, as my uncle spoke, that his voice was unnaturally moved and his manner unwontedly demonstrative. He leaned forward at these last words, for example, and touched me on the knee with his spread fingers, looking up into my face with a certain pallor, and I could see that his eyes shone with a deep-seated fire, and that the lines about his mouth were drawn and tremulous.

Even the entrance of Rorie, and the beginning of our meal, did not detach him from his train of thought beyond a moment. He condescended, indeed, to ask me some questions as to my success at college, but I thought it was with half his mind; and even in his extempore grace, which was, as usual, long and wandering, I could find the trace of his

preoccupation, praying, as he did, that God would "remember in mercy fower puir, feckless, fiddling, sinful creatures here by their leelane beside the great and dowie waters."

Soon there came an interchange of speeches between him and Rorie.

"Was it there?" asked my uncle.

"Ou, ay!" said Rorie.

I observed that they both spoke in a manner of aside, and with some show of embarrassment, and that Mary herself appeared to color, and looked down on her plate. Partly to show my knowledge, and so relieve the party from an awkward strain, partly because I was curious, I pursued the subject.

"You mean the fish?" I asked.

"Whatten fish?" cried my uncle. "Fish, quo' he! Fish! Your een are fu' o' fatness, man; your heid dozened wi' carnal leir. Fish! it's a bogle!"

He spoke with great vehemence, as though angry; and perhaps I was not very willing to be put down so shortly, for young men are disputatious. At least I remember I retorted hotly, crying out upon childish superstitions.

"And ye come frae the college!" sneered Uncle Gordon. "Gude kens what they learn folk there; it's no muckle service onyway. Do ye think, man, that there's naething in a' yon saut wilderness o' a world oot wast there, wi' the sea grasses growin', an' the sea beasts fetchin', an' the sun glintin' down into it, day by day? Na; the sea's like the land, but fearsomer. If there's folk ashore, there's folk in the sea—deid they may be, but they're folk whatever; and as for deils, there's nane that's like the sea deils. There's no sae muckle harm in the land deils, when a's said and done. Lang syne, when I was a callant in the south country, I mind there was an auld, bald bogle in the Peewie Moss. I got a glisk o' him mysel', sittin' on his hunkers in a hag, as gray's a tombstane. An', troth, he was a fearsomelike taed. But he steered naebody. Nae doobt, if ane that was a reprobate, ane the Lord hated, had gone by there wi' his sin still upon his stamach, nae doobt the creature would hae lowped upo' the likes o' him. But there's deils in the deep sea would yoke on a communicant! Eh, sirs, if ye had gane doon wi' the puir lads in the *Christ-Anna,* ye

would ken by now the mercy o' the seas. If ye had sailed it for as lang as me, ye would hate the thocht of it as I do. If ye had but used the een God gave ye, ye would hae learned the wickedness o' that fause, saut, cauld, bullering creature, and of a' that's in it by the Lord's permission: labsters an' partans, an' sic like, howking in the deid; muckle, gutsy, blawing whales; an' fish—the hale clan o' them—cauld-wamed, blind-eed uncanny ferlies. O, sirs," he cried, "the horror—the horror o' the sea!"

We were all somewhat staggered by this outburst; and the speaker himself, after that last hoarse apostrophe, appeared to sink gloomily into his own thoughts. But Rorie, who was greedy of superstitious lore, recalled him to the subject by a question.

"You will not ever have seen a teevil of the sea?" he asked.

"No clearly," replied the other, "I misdoobt if a mere man could see ane clearly and conteenue in the body. I hae sailed wi' a lad—they ca'd him Sandy Gabart; he saw ane, shüre eneuch, an' shüre eneuch it was the end of him. We were seeven days oot frae the Clyde—a sair wark we had had—gaun north wi' seeds an' braws an' things for the Macleod. We had got in ower near under the Cutchull'ns, an' had just gane about by Soa, an' were off on a lang tack, we thocht would maybe hauld as far's Copnahow. I mind the nicht weel; a mune smoored wi' mist; a fine gaun breeze upon the water, but no steedy; an'—what nane o' us likit to hear—anither wund gurlin' owerheid, amang thae fearsome, auld stane craigs o' the Cutchull'ns. Weel, Sandy was forrit wi' the jib sheet; we couldnae see him for the mains'l, that had just begude to draw, when a' at ance he gied a skirl. I luffed for my life, for I thocht we were ower near Soa; but na, it wasnae that, it was puir Sandy Gabart's deid skreigh, or near hand, for he was deid in half an hour. A't he could tell was that a sea deil, or sea bogle, or sea spenster, or siclike, had clum up by the bowsprit, an' gi'en him ae cauld, uncanny look. An', or the life was oot o' Sandy's body, we kent weel what the thing betokened, and why the wund gurled in the taps o' the Cutchull'ns; for doon it cam'—a wund do I ca' it! it was the wund o' the Lord's anger—an' a' that nicht we foucht like men dementit, and

the niest that we kenned we ashore in Loch Uskevagh, an' the cocks were crawin' in Benbecula."

"It will have been a merman," Rorie said.

"A merman!" screamed my uncle with immeasurable scorn. "Auld wives' clavers! There's nae sic things as mermen."

"But what was the creature like?" I asked.

"What like was it? Gude forbid that we suld ken what like it was! It had a kind of a heid upon it—man could say nae mair."

Then Rorie, smarting under the affront, told several tales of mermen, mermaids, and sea horses that had come ashore upon the islands and attacked the crews of boats upon the sea; and my uncle, in spite of his incredulity, listened with uneasy interest.

"Aweel, aweel," he said, "it may be sae; I may be wrang; but I find nae word o' mermen in the Scriptures."

"And you will find nae word of Aros Roost, maybe," objected Rorie, and his argument appeared to carry weight.

When dinner was over, my uncle carried me forth with him to a bank behind the house. It was a very hot and quiet afternoon; scarce a ripple anywhere upon the sea, nor any voice but the familiar voice of sheep and gulls; and perhaps in consequence of this repose in nature, my kinsman showed himself more rational and tranquil than before. He spoke evenly and almost cheerfully of my career, with every now and then a reference to the lost ship or the treasures it had brought to Aros. For my part, I listened to him in a sort of trance, gazing with all my heart on that remembered scene, and drinking gladly the sea air and the smoke of peats that had been lit by Mary.

Perhaps an hour had passed when my uncle, who had all the while been covertly gazing on the surface of the little bay, rose to his feet and bade me follow his example. Now I should say that the great run of tide at the southwest end of Aros exercises a perturbing influence round all the coast. In Sandag Bay, to the south, a strong current runs at certain periods of the flood and ebb respectively; but in this northern bay—Aros Bay, as it is called—where the house stands and on which my uncle was now gazing, the only sign of disturbance is toward the end of the ebb, and even

then it is too slight to be remarkable. When there is any swell, nothing can be seen at all; but when it is calm, as it often is, there appear certain strange, undecipherable marks —sea runes, as we may name them—on the glassy surface of the bay. The like is common in a thousand places on the coast; and many a boy must have amused himself as I did, seeking to read in them some reference to himself or those he loved. It was to these marks that my uncle now directed my attention, struggling as he did so, with an evident reluctance.

"Do ye see yon scart upo' the water?" he inquired; "yon ane wast the gray stane? Ay? Weel, it'll no be like a letter, wull it?"

"Certainly it is," I replied. "I have often remarked it. It is like a C."

He heaved a sigh as if heavily disappointed with my answer, and then added below his breath: "Ay, for the *Christ-Anna.*"

"I used to suppose, sir, it was for myself," said I; "for my name is Charles."

"And so ye saw't afore?" he ran on, not heeding my remark. "Weel, weel, but that's unco strange. Maybe, it's been there waitin', as a man wad say, through a' the weary ages. Man, but that's awfu'." And then, breaking off: "Ye'll no see anither, will ye?" he asked.

"Yes," said I. "I see another very plainly, near the Ross side, where the road comes down—an M."

"An M," he repeated very low; and then, again after another pause: "An' what wad ye make o' that?" he inquired.

"I had always thought it to mean Mary, sir," I answered, growing somewhat red, convinced as I was in my own mind that I was on the threshold of a decisive explanation.

But we were each following his own train of thought to the exclusion of the other's. My uncle once more paid no attention to my words; only hung his head and held his peace; and I might have been led to fancy that he had not heard me, if his next speech had not contained a kind of echo from my own.

"I would say naething o' thae clavers to Mary," he observed, and began to walk forward.

There is a belt of turf along the side of Aros Bay where walking is easy; and it was along this that I silently followed my silent kinsman. I was perhaps a little disappointed at having lost so good an opportunity to declare my love; but I was at the same time far more deeply exercised at the change that had befallen my uncle. He was never an ordinary, never, in the strict sense, an amiable, man; but there was nothing in even the worst that I had known of him before, to prepare me for so strange a transformation. It was impossible to close the eyes against one fact; that he had, as the saying goes, something on his mind; and as I mentally ran over the different words which might be represented by the letter M — misery, mercy, marriage, money, and the like—I was arrested with a sort of start by the word murder. I was still considering the ugly sound and fatal meaning of the word, when the direction of our walk brought us to a point from which a view was to be had to either side, back towards Aros Bay and homestead, and forward on the ocean, dotted to the north with isles, and lying to the southward blue and open to the sky. There my guide came to a halt, and stood staring for a while on that expanse. Then he turned to me and laid a hand on my arm.

"Ye think there's naething there?" he said, pointing with his pipe; and then cried out aloud, with a kind of exultation: "I'll tell ye man! The deid are down there—thick like rattons!"

He turned at once, and, without another word, we retraced our steps to the house of Aros.

I was eager to be alone with Mary; yet it was not till after supper, and then but for a short while, that I could have a word with her. I lost no time beating about the bush, but spoke out plainly what was on my mind.

"Mary," I said, "I have not come to Aros without a hope. If that should prove well founded, we may all leave and go somewhere else, secure of daily bread and comfort; secure, perhaps, of something far beyond that, which it would seem extravagant in me to promise. But there's a hope that lies nearer to my heart than money." And at that I paused. "You can guess fine what that is, Mary," I said. She looked away from me in silence, and that was

small encouragement, but I was not to be put off. "All my days I have thought the world of you," I continued; "the time goes on and I think always the more of you; I could not think to be happy or hearty in my life without you: you are the apple of my eye." Still she looked away, and said never a word; but I thought I saw that her hands shook. "Mary," I cried in fear, "do ye no like me?"

"Oh, Charlie man," she said, "is this a time to speak of it? Let me be, a while; let me be the way I am; it'll not be you that loses by the waiting!"

I made out by her voice that she was nearly weeping, and this put me out of any thought but to compose her. "Mary Ellen," I said, "say no more; I did not come to trouble you: your way shall be mine, and your time, too; and you have told me all I wanted. Only just this one thing more: what ails you?"

She owned it was her father, but would enter into no particulars, only shook her head, and said he was not well and not like himself, and it was a great pity. She knew nothing of the wreck. "I havenae been near it," said she. "What for would I go near it, Charlie lad? The poor souls are gone to their account long syne; and I would just have wished they had ta'en their gear with them—poor souls!"

This was scarcely any great encouragement for me to tell her of the *Espirito Santo;* yet I did so, and at the very first word she cried out in surprise. "There was a man at Grisapol," she said, "in the month of May—a little, yellow, black-avised body, they tell me, with gold rings upon his fingers, and a beard; and he was speiring high and low for that same ship."

It was toward the end of April that I had been given these papers to sort out by Dr. Robertson: and it came suddenly back upon my mind that they were thus prepared for a Spanish historian, or a man calling himself such, who had come with high recommendations to the Principal, on a mission of inquiry as to the dispersion of the great Armada. Putting one thing with another, I fancied that the visitor "with the gold rings upon his fingers" might be the same with Dr. Robertson's historian from Madrid. If that were so, he would be more likely after treasure for himself than information for a learned society. I made up

my mind, I should lose no time over my undertaking; and if the ship lay sunk in Sandag Bay, as perhaps both he and I supposed, it should not be for the advantage of this ringed adventurer, but for Mary and myself, and for the good, old, honest, kindly family of the Darnaways.

CHAPTER III

PAST AND PRESENT IN SANDAG BAY

I WAS early afoot next morning; and as soon as I had a bite to eat, set forth upon a tour of exploration. Something in my heart distinctly told me that I should find the ship of the Armada; and although I did not give way entirely to such hopeful thoughts, I was still very light in spirits and walked upon air. Aros is a very rough islet, its surface strewn with great rocks and shaggy with fern and heather; and my way lay almost north and south across the highest knoll; and though the whole distance was inside of two miles, it took more time and exertion than four upon a level road. Upon the summit, I paused. Although not very high—not three hundred feet, as I think—it yet outtops all the neighboring lowlands of the Ross, and commands a great view of sea and islands. The sun, which had been up some time, was already hot upon my neck; the air was listless and thundery, although purely clear; away over the northwest, where the isles lie thickliest congregated, some half a dozen small and ragged clouds hung together in a covey; and the head of Ben Kyaw wore, not merely a few streamers, but a solid hood of vapor. There was a threat in the weather. The sea, it is true, was smooth like glass: even the *Roost* was but a seam on that wide mirror, and the Merry Men no more than caps of foam; but to my eye and ear, so long familiar with these places, the sea also seemed to lie uneasily; a sound of it, like a long sigh, mounted to me where I stood; and, quiet as it was, the *Roost* itself appeared to be revolving mischief. For I ought to say that all we dwellers in these parts attributed, if not prescience, at least a quality of warning, to that strange and dangerous creature of the tides.

I hurried on, then, with the greater speed, and had soon

descended the slope of Aros to the part that we call Sandag Bay. It is a pretty large piece of water compared with the size of the isle; well sheltered from all but the prevailing wind; sandy and shoal and bounded by low sand-hills to the west, but to the eastward lying several fathoms deep along a ledge of rocks. It is upon that side that, at a certain time each flood, the current mentioned by my uncle sets so strong into the bay; a little later, when the *Roost* begins to work higher, an undertow runs still more strongly in the reverse direction; and it is the action of this last, as I suppose, that has scoured that part so deep. Nothing is to be seen out of Sandag Bay but one small segment of the horizon and, in heavy weather, the breakers flying high over a deep sea reef.

From halfway down the hill, I had perceived the wreck of February last, a brig of considerable tonnage, lying, with her back broken, high and dry on the east corner of the sands; and I was making directly toward it, and already almost on the margin of the turf, when my eyes were suddenly arrested by a spot, cleared of fern and heather, and marked by one of those long, low, and almost human-looking mounds that we see so commonly in graveyards. I stopped like a man shot. Nothing had been said to me of any dead man or interment on the island; Rorie, Mary, and my uncle had all equally held their peace; of her at least, I was certain that she must be ignorant; and yet here, before my eyes, was proof indubitable of the fact. Here was a grave; and I had to ask myself, with a chill, what manner of man lay there in his last sleep, awaiting the signal of the Lord in that solitary, sea-beat resting place? My mind supplied no answer but what I feared to entertain. Shipwrecked, at least, he must have been; perhaps, like the old Armada mariners, from some far and rich land oversea; or perhaps one of my own race, perishing within eyesight of the smoke of home. I stood a while uncovered by his side, and I could have desired that it had lain in our religion to put up some prayer for that unhappy stranger, or, in the old classic way, outwardly to honor his misfortune. I knew, although his bones lay there, a part of Aros, till the trumpet sounded, his imperishable soul was forth and far away, among the raptures of the everlasting Sabbath or the pangs of hell;

and yet my mind misgave me even with a fear, that perhaps he was near me where I stood, guarding his sepulchre, and lingering on the scene of his unhappy fate.

Certainly it was with a spirit somewhat overshadowed that I turned away from the grave to the hardly less melancholy spectacle of the wreck. Her stem was above the first arc of the flood; she was broken in two a little abaft the foremast—though indeed she had none, both masts having broken short in her disaster; and as the pitch of the beach was very sharp and sudden, and the bows lay many feet below the stern, the fracture gaped widely open, and you could see right through her poor hull upon the farther side. Her name was much defaced, and I could not make out clearly whether she was called *Christiania,* after the Norwegian city, or *Christiana,* after the good woman, Christian's wife, in that old book the "Pilgrim's Progress." By her build she was a foreign ship, but I was not certain of her nationality. She had been painted green, but the color was faded and weathered, and the paint peeling off in strips. The wreck of the mainmast lay alongside, half buried in sand. She was a forlorn sight, indeed, and I could not look without emotion at the bits of rope that still hung about her, so often handled of yore by shouting seamen; or the little scuttle where they had passed up and down to their affairs; or that poor noseless angel of a figure head that had dipped into so many running billows.

I do not know whether it came most from the ship or from the grave, but I fell into some melancholy scruples, as I stood there, leaning with one hand against the battered timbers. The homelessness of men and even of inanimate vessels, cast away upon strange shores, came strongly in upon my mind. To make a profit of such pitiful misadventures seemed an unmanly and a sordid act; and I began to think of my then quest as of something sacrilegious in its nature. But when I remembered Mary, I took heart again. My uncle would never consent to an imprudent marriage, nor would she, as I was persuaded, wed without his full approval. It behoved me, then, to be up and doing for my wife; and I thought with a laugh how long it was since that great sea-castle the *Espirito Santo,* had left her bones

in Sandag Bay, and how weak it would be to consider rights so long extinguished and misfortunes so long forgotten in the process of time.

I had my theory of where to seek for her remains. The set of the current and the soundings both pointed to the east side of the bay under the ledge of rocks. If she had been lost in Sandag Bay, and if, after these centuries, any portion of her held together, it was there that I should find it. The water deepens, as I have said, with great rapidity, and even close alongside the rocks several fathoms may be found. As I walked upon the edge I could see far and wide over the sandy bottom of the bay; the sun shone clear and green and steady in the deeps; the bay seemed rather like a great transparent crystal, as one sees them in a lapidary's shop; there was naught to show that it was water but an internal trembling, a hovering within of sun glints and netted shadows, and now and then a faint lap and a dying bubble round the edge. The shadows of the rocks lay out for some distance at their feet, so that my own shadow, moving, pausing, and stooping on the top of that, reached sometimes half across the bay. It was above all in this belt of shadows that I hunted for the *Espirito Santo;* since it was there the undertow ran strongest, whether in or out. Cool as the whole water seemed this broiling day, it looked, in that part, yet cooler, and had a mysterious invitation for the eyes. Peer as I pleased, however, I could see nothing but a few fishes or a bush of sea tangle, and here and there a lump of rock that had fallen from above and now lay separate on the sandy floor. Twice did I pass from one end to the other of the rocks, and in the whole distance I could see nothing of the wreck, nor any place but one where it was possible for it to be. This was a large terrace in five fathoms of water, raised off the surface of the sand to a considerable height, and looking from above like a mere outgrowth of the rocks on which I walked. It was one mass of great sea-tangles like a grove, which prevented me judging of its nature, but in shape and size it bore some likeness to a vessel's hull. At least it was my best chance. If the *Espirito Santo* lay not there under the tangles, it lay nowhere at all in Sandag Bay; and I prepared to put the question to the proof, once and for all, and either go back

to Aros a rich man or cured for ever of my dreams of wealth.

I stripped to the skin, and stood on the extreme margin with my hands clasped, irresolute. The bay at that time was utterly quiet; there was no sound but from a school of porpoises somewhere out of sight behind the point; yet a certain fear withheld me on the threshold of my venture. Sad sea feelings, scraps of my uncle's superstitions, thoughts of the dead, of the grave, of the old broken ships, drifted through my mind. But the strong sun upon my shoulders warmed me to the heart, and I stooped forward and plunged into the sea.

It was all that I could do to catch a trail of the sea-tangle that grew so thickly on the terrace; but once so far anchored I secured myself by grasping a whole armful of these thick and slimy stalks, and, planting my feet against the edge, I looked around me. On all sides the clear sand stretched forth unbroken; it came to the foot of the rocks, scoured into the likeness of an alley in a garden by the action of the tides; and before me, for as far as I could see, nothing was visible but the same many-folded sand upon the sun-bright bottom of the bay. Yet the terrace to which I was then holding was as thick with strong sea growths as a tuft of heather, and the cliff from which it bulged hung draped below the water line with brown lianas. In this complexity of forms, all swaying together in the current, things were hard to be distinguished; and I was still uncertain whether my feet were pressed upon the natural rock or upon the timbers of the Armada treasureship, when the whole tuft of tangle came away in my hand, and in an instant I was on the surface, and the shores of the bay and the bright water swam before my eyes in a glory of crimson.

I clambered back upon the rocks, and threw the plant of tangle at my feet. Something at the same moment rang sharply, like a falling coin. I stooped, and there, sure enough, crusted with the red rust, there lay an iron shoe buckle. The sight of this poor human relic thrilled me to the heart, but not with hope nor fear, only with a desolate melancholy. I held it in my hand, and the thought of its owner appeared before me like the presence of an actual

man. His weather-beaten face, his sailor's hands, his sea-voice hoarse with singing at the capstan, the very foot that had once worn that buckle and trod so much along the swerving decks—the whole human fact of him, as a creature like myself, with hair and blood and seeing eyes, haunted me in that sunny, solitary place, not like a specter, but like some friend whom I had basely injured. Was the great treasure ship indeed below there, with her guns and chain and treasure, as she had sailed from Spain; her decks a garden for the seaweed, her cabin a breeding place for fish, soundless but for the dredging water, motionless but for the waving of the tangle upon her battlements—that old, populous, sea-riding castle, now a reef in Sandag Bay? Or, as I thought it likelier, was this a waif from the disaster of the foreign brig—was this shoe buckle bought but the other day and worn by a man of my own period in the world's history, hearing the same news from day to day, thinking the same thoughts, praying, perhaps, in the same temple with myself? However it was, I was assailed with dreary thoughts; my uncle's words, "the dead are down there," echoed in my ears; and though I determined to dive once more, it was with a strong repugnance that I stepped forward to the margin of the rocks.

A great change passed at that moment over the appearance of the bay. It was no more that clear, visible interior, like a house roofed with glass, where the green, submarine sunshine slept so stilly. A breeze, I suppose, had flawed the surface, and a sort of trouble and blackness filled its bosom, where flashes of light and clouds of shadow tossed confusedly together. Even the terrace below obscurely rocked and quivered. It seemed a graver thing to venture on this place of ambushes; and when I leaped into the sea the second time it was with a quaking in my soul.

I secured myself as at first, and groped among the waving tangle. All that met my touch was cold and soft and gluey. The thicket was alive with crabs and lobsters, trundling to and fro lopsidedly, and I had to harden my heart against the horror of their carrion neighborhood. On all sides I could feel the grain and the clefts of hard, living stone; no planks, no iron, not a sign of any wreck; the *Espirito Santo* was not there. I remember I had almost a

sense of relief in my disappointment, and I was about ready to leave go, when something happened that sent me to the surface with my heart in my mouth. I had already stayed somewhat late over my explorations; the current was freshening with the change of the tide, and Sandag Bay was no longer a safe place for a single swimmer. Well, just at the last moment there came a sudden flush of current, dredging through the tangles like a wave. I lost one hold, was flung sprawling on my side, and, instinctively grasping for a fresh support, my fingers closed on something hard and cold. I think I knew at that moment what it was. At least I instantly left hold of the tangle, leaped for the surface, and clambered out next moment on the friendly rocks with the bone of a man's leg in my grasp.

Mankind is a material creature, slow to think and dull to perceive connections. The grave, the wreck of the brig, and the rusty shoe buckle were surely plain advertisements. A child might have read their dismal story, and yet it was not until I touched that actual piece of mankind that the full horror of the charnel ocean burst upon my spirit. I laid the bone beside the buckle, picked up my clothes, and ran as I was along the rocks toward the human shore. I could not be far enough from the spot; no fortune was vast enough to tempt me back again. The bones of the drowned dead should henceforth roll undisturbed by me, whether on tangle or minted gold. But as soon as I trod the good earth again, and had covered my nakedness against the sun, I knelt down over against the ruins of the brig, and out of the fullness of my heart prayed long and passionately for all poor souls upon the sea. A generous prayer is never presented in vain; the petition may be refused, but the petitioner is always, I believe, rewarded by some gracious visitation. The horror, at least, was lifted from my mind; I could look with calm of spirit on that great bright creature, God's ocean; and as I set off homeward up the rough sides of Aros, nothing remained of any concern beyond a deep determination to meddle no more with the spoils of wrecked vessels or the treasures of the dead.

I was already some way up the hill before I paused to breathe and look behind me. The sight that met my eyes was doubly strange.

For, first, the storm that I had foreseen was now advancing with almost tropical rapidity. The whole surface of the sea had been dulled from its conspicuous brightness to an ugly hue of corrugated lead; already in the distance the white waves, the "skipper's daughters," had begun to flee before a breeze that was still insensible on Aros; and already along the curve of Sandag Bay there was a splashing run of sea that I could hear from where I stood. The change upon the sky was even more remarkable. There had begun to arise out of the southwest a huge and solid continent of scowling cloud; here and there, through rents in its contexture, the sun still poured a sheaf of spreading rays; and here and there, from all its edges, vast inky streamers lay forth along the yet unclouded sky. The menace was express and imminent. Even as I gazed, the sun was blotted out. At any moment the tempest might fall upon Aros in its might.

The suddenness of this change of weather so fixed my eyes on heaven that it was some seconds before they alighted on the bay, mapped out below my feet, and robbed a moment later of the sun. The knoll which I had just surmounted overflanked a little amphitheater of lower hillocks sloping toward the sea, and beyond that the yellow arc of beach and the whole extent of Sandag Bay. It was a scene on which I had often looked down, but where I had never before beheld a human figure. I had but just turned my back upon it and left it empty, and my wonder may be fancied when I saw a boat and several men in that deserted spot. The boat was lying by the rocks. A pair of fellows, bareheaded, with their sleeves rolled up, and one with a boathook, kept her with difficulty to her moorings, for the current was growing brisker every moment. A little way off upon the ledge two men in black clothes, whom I judged to be superior in rank, laid their heads together over some task which at first I did not understand, but a second after I had made it out—they were taking bearings with the compass; and just then I saw one of them unroll a sheet of paper and lay his finger down, as though identifying features in a map. Meanwhile a third was walking to and fro, poking among the rocks and peering over the edge into the water. While I was still watching them with the

stupefaction of surprise, my mind hardly yet able to work on what my eyes reported, this third person suddenly stooped and summoned his companions with a cry so loud that it reached my ears upon the hill. The others ran to him, even dropping the compass in their hurry, and I could see the bone and the shoe buckle going from hand to hand, causing the most unusual gesticulations of surprise and interest. Just then I could hear the seamen crying from the boat, and saw them point westward to that cloud continent which was ever the more rapidly unfurling its blackness over heaven. The others seemed to consult; but the danger was too pressing to be braved, and they bundled into the boat carrying my relics with them, and set forth out of the bay with all speed of oars.

I made no more ado about the matter, but turned and ran for the house. Whoever these men were, it was fit my uncle should be instantly informed. It was not then altogether too late in the day for a descent of the Jacobites; and may be Prince Charlie, whom I knew my uncle to detest, was one of the three superiors whom I had seen upon the rock. Yet as I ran, leaping from rock to rock, and turned the matter loosely in my mind, this theory grew ever the longer the less welcome to my reason. The compass, the map, the interest awakened by the buckle, and the conduct of that one among the strangers who had looked so often below him in the water, all seemed to point to a different explanation of their presence on that outlying, obscure islet of the western sea. The Madrid historian, the search instituted by Dr. Robertson, the bearded stranger with the rings, my own fruitless search that very morning in the deep water of Sandag Bay, ran together, piece by piece, in my memory, and I made sure that these strangers must be Spaniards in quest of ancient treasure and the lost ship of the Armada. But the people living in outlying islands, such as Aros, are answerable for their own security; there is none near by to protect or even to help them; and the presence in such a spot of a crew of foreign adventurers—poor, greedy, and most likely lawless—filled me with apprehensions for my uncle's money, and even for the safety of his daughter. I was still wondering how we were to get rid of them when I came, all breathless, to the top of

Aros. The whole world was shadowed over; only in the extreme east, on a hill of the mainland, one last gleam of sunshine lingered like a jewel; rain had begun to fall, not heavily, but in great drops; the sea was rising with each moment, and already a band of white encircled Aros and the nearer coasts of Grisapol. The boat was still pulling seaward, but I now became aware of what had been hidden from me lower down—a large, heavily sparred, handsome schooner, lying to at the south end of Aros. Since I had not seen her in the morning when I had looked around so closely at the signs of the weather, and upon these lone waters where a sail was rarely visible, it was clear she must have lain last night behind the uninhabited Eilean Gour, and this proved conclusively that she was manned by strangers to our coast, for that anchorage, though good enough to look at, is little better than a trap for ships. With such ignorant sailors upon so wild a coast, the coming gale was not unlikely to bring death upon its wings.

CHAPTER IV

THE GALE

I FOUND my uncle at the gable end, watching the signs of the weather, with a pipe in his fingers.

"Uncle," said I, "there were men ashore at Sandag Bay——"

I had no time to go further; indeed, I not only forgot my words, but even my weariness, so strange was the effect on Uncle Gordon. He dropped his pipe and fell back against the end of the house with his jaw fallen, his eyes staring, and his long face as white as paper. We must have looked at one another silently for a quarter of a minute, before he made answer in this extraordinary fashion: "Had he a hair kep on?"

I knew as well as if I had been there that the man who now lay buried at Sandag had worn a hairy cap, and that he had come ashore alive. For the first and only time I lost toleration for the man who was my benefactor and the father of the woman I hoped to call my wife.

"These were living men," said I, "perhaps Jacobites, perhaps the French, perhaps pirates, perhaps adventurers come here to seek the Spanish treasureship; but, whatever they may be, dangerous at least to your daughter and my cousin. As for your own guilty terrors, man, the dead sleeps well where you have laid him. I stood this morning by his grave; he will not wake before the trump of doom."

My kinsman looked upon me, blinking, while I spoke; then he fixed his eyes for a little on the ground, and pulled his fingers foolishly; but it was plain that he was past the power of speech.

"Come," said I. "You must think for others. You must come up the hill with me, and see this ship."

He obeyed without a word or a look, following slowly after my impatient strides. The spring seemed to have gone out of his body, and he scrambled heavily up and down the rocks, instead of leaping, as he was wont, from one to another. Nor could I, for all my cries, induce him to make better haste. Only once he replied to me complainingly, and like one in bodily pain: "Ay, ay, man, I'm coming." Long before we had reached the top, I had no other thought for him but pity. If the crime had been monstrous, the punishment was in proportion.

At last we emerged above the sky line of the hill, and could see around us. All was black and stormy to the eye; the last gleam of sun had vanished; a wind had sprung up, not yet high, but gusty and unsteady to the point; the rain, on the other hand, had ceased. Short as was the interval, the sea already ran vastly higher than when I had stood there last; already it had begun to break over some of the outward reefs, and already it moaned aloud in the sea caves of Aros. I looked at first, in vain for the schooner.

"There she is," I said at last. But her new position, and the course she was now lying, puzzled me. "They cannot mean to beat to sea," I cried.

"That's what they mean," said my uncle, with something like joy; and just then the schooner went about and stood upon another tack, which put the question beyond the reach of doubt. These strangers, seeing a gale on hand, had thought first of sea room. With the wind that threatened,

in these reef-sown waters and contending against so violent a stream of tide, their course was certain death.

"Good God!" said I, "they are all lost."

"Ay," returned my uncle, "a'—a' lost. They hadnae a chance but to rin for Kyle Dona. The gate they're gaun the noo, they couldnae win through an' the muckle deil were there to pilot them. Eh, man," he continued, touching me on the sleeve, "it's a braw nicht for a shipwreck! Twa in ae twalmonth! Eh, but the Merry Men 'll dance bonny!"

I looked at him, and it was then that I began to fancy him no longer in his right mind. He was peering up to me, as if for sympathy, a timid joy in his eyes. All that had passed between us was already forgotten in the prospect of this fresh disaster.

"If it were not too late," I cried with indignation, "I would take the coble and go out to warn them."

"Na, na," he protested, "ye maunnae interfere; ye maunnae meddle wi' the like o' that. It's His,"—doffing his bonnet—"His wull. And, eh, man! but it's a braw nicht for't!"

Something like fear began to creep into my soul; and, reminding him that I had not yet dined, I proposed we should return to the house. But no; nothing would tear him from his place of outlook.

"I maun see the hail thing, man, Cherlie," he explained; and then as the schooner went about a second time, "Eh, but they han'le her bonny!" he cried. "The *Christ-Anna* was naething to this."

Already the men on board the schooner must have begun to realize some part, but not yet the twentieth, of the dangers that environed their doomed ship. At every lull of the capricious wind they must have seen how fast the current swept them back. Each tack was made shorter, as they saw how little it prevailed. Every moment the rising swell began to boom and foam upon another sunken reef; and ever and again a breaker would fall in sounding ruin under the very bows of her, and the brown reef and streaming tangle appear in the hollow of the wave. I tell you, they had to stand to their tackle: there was no idle man aboard that ship, God knows. It was upon the progress of a scene so horrible to any human-hearted man that my misguided uncle now pored and gloated like a connoisseur. As I turned to

go down the hill, he was lying on his belly on the summit, with his hands stretched forth and clutching in the heather. He seemed rejuvenated, mind and body.

When I got back to the house already dismally affected, I was still more sadly downcast at the sight of Mary. She had her sleeves rolled up over her strong arms, and was quietly making bread. I got a bannock from the dresser and sat down to eat it in silence.

"Are ye wearied, lad?" she asked after a while.

"I am not so much wearied, Mary," I replied, getting on my feet, "as I am weary of delay, and perhaps of Aros, too. You know me well enough to judge me fairly, say what I like. Well, Mary, you may be sure of this: you had better be anywhere but here."

"I'll be sure of one thing," she returned: "I'll be where my duty is."

"You forget, you have a duty to yourself," I said.

"Ay, man?" she replied, pounding at the dough; "will you have found that in the Bible, now?"

"Mary," I said solemnly, "you must not laugh at me just now. God knows I am in no heart for laughing. If we could get your father with us, it would be best; but with him or without him, I want you far away from here, my girl; for your own sake, and for mine, ay, and for your father's, too, I want you far—far away from here. I came with other thoughts; I came here as a man comes home; now it is all changed, and I have no desire nor hope but to flee—for that's the word—flee, like a bird out of the fowler's snare, from this accursed island."

She had stopped her work by this time.

"And do you think, now," said she, "do you think, now, I have neither eyes nor ears? Do ye think I have nae broken my heart to have these braws (as he calls them, God forgive him!) thrown into the sea? Do ye think I have lived with him, day in, day out, and not seen what you saw in an hour or two? No," she said, "I know there's wrong in it; what wrong, I neither know nor want to know. There was never an ill thing made better by meddling, that I could hear of. But, my lad, you must never ask me to leave my father. While the breath is in his body, I'll be with him. And he's not long for here, either: that I can

tell you, Charlie—he's not long for here. The mark is on his brow; and better so—maybe better so."

I was a while silent, not knowing what to say; and when I roused my head at last to speak, she got before me.

"Charlie," she said, "what's right for me, neednae be right for you. There's sin upon this house and trouble; you are a stranger; take your things upon your back and go your ways to better places and to better folk, and if you were ever minded to come back, though it were twenty years syne, you would find me aye waiting."

"Mary Ellen," I said, "I asked you to be my wife, and you said as good as yes. That's done for good. Wherever you are, I am; as I shall answer to my God."

As I said the words, the wind suddenly burst out raving, and then seemed to stand still and shudder round the house of Aros. It was the first squall, or prologue, of the coming tempest, and as we started and looked about us, we found that a gloom, like the approach of evening, had settled round the house.

"God pity all poor folks at sea!" she said. "We'll see no more of my father till the morrow's morning."

And then she told me, as we sat by the fire and hearkened to the rising gusts, of how this change had fallen upon my uncle. All last winter he had been dark and fitful in his mind. Whenever the *Roost* ran high, or, as Mary said, whenever the Merry Men were dancing, he would lie out for hours together on the Head, if it were at night, or on the top of Aros by day, watching the tumult of the sea, and sweeping the horizon for a sail. After February the tenth, when the wealth-bringing wreck was cast ashore at Sandag, he had been at first unnaturally gay, and his excitement had never fallen in degree, but only changed in kind from dark to darker. He neglected his work, and kept Rorie idle. They two would speak together by the hour at the gable end, in guarded tones and with an air of secrecy and almost of guilt; and if she questioned either, as at first she sometimes did, her inquiries were put aside with confusion. Since Rorie had first remarked the fish that hung about the ferry, his master had never set foot but once upon the mainland of the Ross. That once—it was in the height of the springs—he had passed dryshod while the tide was out;

but, having lingered overlong on the far side, found himself cut off from Aros by the returning waters. It was with a shriek of agony that he had leaped across the gut, and he had reached home thereafter in a fever-fit of fear. A fear of the sea, a constant haunting thought of the sea, appeared in his talk and devotions, and even in his looks when he was silent.

Rorie alone came in to supper; but a little later my uncle appeared, took a bottle under his arm, put some bread in his pocket, and set forth again to his outlook, followed this time by Rorie. I heard that the schooner was losing ground, but the crew were still fighting every inch with hopeless ingenuity and courage; and the news filled my mind with blackness.

A little after sundown the full fury of the gale broke forth, such a gale as I have never seen in summer, nor, seeing how swiftly it had come, even in winter. Mary and I sat in silence, the house quaking overhead, the tempest howling without, the fire between us sputtering with raindrops. Our thoughts were far away with the poor fellows on the schooner, or my not less unhappy uncle, houseless on the promontory; and yet ever and again we were startled back to ourselves, when the wind would rise and strike the gable like a solid body, or suddenly fall and draw away, so that the fire leaped into flame and our hearts bounded in our sides. Now the storm in its might would seize and shake the four corners of the roof, roaring like Leviathan in anger. Anon, in a lull, cold eddies of tempest moved shudderingly in the room, lifting the hair upon our heads and passing between us as we sat. And again the wind would break forth in a chorus of melancholy sounds, hooting low in the chimney, wailing with flutelike softness round the house.

It was perhaps eight o'clock when Rorie came in and pulled me mysteriously to the door. My uncle, it appeared, had frightened even his constant comrade; and Rorie, uneasy at his extravagance, prayed me to come out and share the watch. I hastened to do as I was asked; the more readily as, what with fear and horror, and the electrical tension of the night, I was myself restless and disposed for action. I told Mary to be under no alarm, for I should be a safe-

guard on her father; and wrapping myself warmly in a plaid, I followed Rorie into the open air.

The night, though we were so little past midsummer, was as dark as January. Intervals of a groping twilight alternated with spells of utter blackness; and it was impossible to trace the reason of these changes in the flying horror of the sky. The wind blew the breath out of a man's nostrils; all heaven seemed to thunder overhead like one huge sail; and when there fell a momentary lull on Aros, we could hear the gusts dismally sweeping in the distance. Over all the lowlands of the Ross, the wind must have blown as fierce as on the open sea; and God only knows the uproar that was raging around the head of Ben Kyaw. Sheets of mingled spray and rain were driven in our faces. All round the isle of Aros the surf, with an incessant, hammering thunder, beat upon the reefs and beaches. Now louder in one place, now lower in another, like the combinations of orchestral music, the constant mass of sound was hardly varied for a moment. And loud above all this hurly burly I could hear the changeful voices of the *Roost* and the intermittent roaring of the Merry Men. At that hour, there flashed into my mind the reason of the name that they were called. For the noise of them seemed almost mirthful, as it out-topped the other noises of the night; or if not mirthful, yet instinct with a portentous joviality. Nay, and it seemed even human. As when savage men have drunk away their reason, and, discarding speech, bawl together in their madness by the hour; so, to my ears, these deadly breakers shouted by Aros in the night.

Arm in arm, and staggering against the wind, Rorie and I won every yard of ground with conscious effort. We slipped on the wet sod, we fell together sprawling on the rocks. Bruised, drenched, beaten, and breathless, it must have taken us near half an hour to get from the house down to the Head that overlooks the *Roost*. There, it seemed, was my uncle's favorite observatory. Right in the face of it, where the cliff is highest and most sheer, a hump of earth, like a parapet, makes a place of shelter from the common winds, where a man may sit in quiet and see the tide and the mad billows contending at his feet. As he might look down from the window of a house upon some street dis-

turbance, so, from this post, he looks down upon the tumbling of the Merry Men. On such a night, of course, he peers upon a world of blackness, where the waters wheel and boil, where the waves joust together with the noise of an explosion, and the foam towers and vanishes in the twinkling of an eye. Never before had I seen the Merry Men thus violent. The fury, height and transiency of their spoutings was a thing to be seen and not recounted. High over our heads on the cliff rose their white columns in the darkness; and the same instant, like phantoms, they were gone. Sometimes three at a time would thus aspire and vanish; sometimes a gust took them, and the spray would fall about us, heavy as a wave. And yet the spectacle was rather maddening in its levity than impressive by its force. Thought was beaten down by the confounding uproar; a gleeful vacancy possessed the brains of men, a state akin to madness; and I found myself at times following the dance of the Merry Men as it were a tune upon a jigging instrument.

I first caught sight of my uncle when we were still some yards away in one of the flying glimpses of twilight that chequered the pitch darkness of the night. He was standing up behind the parapet, his head thrown back and the bottle to his mouth. As he put it down, he saw and recognized us with a toss of one hand fleeringly above his head.

"Has he been drinking?" shouted I to Rorie.

"He will aye be drunk when the wind blaws," returned Rorie in the same high key, and it was all that I could do to hear him.

"Then—was he so—in February?" I inquired.

Rorie's "Ay" was a cause of joy to me. The murder, then, had not sprung in cold blood from calculation; it was an act of madness no more to be condemned than to be pardoned. My uncle was a dangerous mad-man, if you will, but he was not cruel and base as I had feared. Yet what a scene for a carouse, what an incredible vice, was this that the poor man had chosen! I have always thought drunkenness a wild and almost fearful pleasure, rather demoniacal than human; but drunkenness, out here in the roaring blackness, on the edge of a cliff above that hell of waters, the man's head spinning like the *Roost,* his foot tottering on the edge of death, his ear watching for the

signs of shipwreck, surely that, if it were credible in anyone, was morally impossible in a man like my uncle, whose mind was set upon a damnatory creed and haunted by the darkest superstitions. Yet so it was; and, as we reached the bight of shelter and could breathe again, I saw the man's eyes shining in the night with an unholy glimmer.

"Eh, Charlie, man, it's grand!" he cried. "See to them!" he continued, dragging me to the edge of the abyss from whence arose that deafening clamor and those clouds of spray; "see to them dancin', man! Is that no wicked?"

He pronounced the word with gusto, and I thought it suited with the scene.

"They're yowlin' for thon schooner," he went on, his thin, insane voice clearly audible in the shelter of the bank, "an' she's comin' aye nearer, aye nearer, aye nearer an' nearer an' nearer; an' they ken't, the folk kens it, they ken weel it's by wi' them. Charlie, lad, they're a' drunk in yon schooner, a' dozened wi' drink. They were a' drunk in the *Christ-Anna,* at the hinder end. There's nane could droon at sea wantin' the brandy. Hoot awa, what do you ken?" with a sudden blast of anger. "I tell ye, it cannae be; they daurnae droon withoot it. Ha'e," holding out the bottle, "tak' a sowp."

I was about to refuse, but Rorie touched me as if in warning; and indeed I had already thought better of the movement. I took the bottle, therefore, and not only drank freely myself, but contrived to spill even more as I was doing so. It was pure spirit, and almost strangled me to swallow. My kinsman did not observe the loss, but, once more throwing back his head, drained the remainder to the dregs. Then, with a loud laugh, he cast the bottle forth among the Merry Men, who seemed to leap up, shouting to receive it.

"Ha'e, bairns!" he cried, "there's your han'sel. Ye'll get bonnier nor that, or morning."

Suddenly, out in the black night before us, and not two hundred yards away, we heard, at a moment when the wind was silent, the clear note of a human voice. Instantly the wind swept howling down upon the Head, and the *Roost* bellowed, and churned, and danced with a new fury. But we had heard the sound, and we knew, with agony, that this

was the doomed ship now close on ruin, and that what we had heard was the voice of her master issuing his last command. Crouching together on the edge, we waited, straining every sense, for the inevitable end. It was long, however, and to us it seemed like ages, ere the schooner suddenly appeared for one brief instant, relieved against a tower of glimmering foam. I still see her reefed mainsail flapping loose, as the boom fell heavily across the deck; I still see the black outline of the hull, and still think I can distinguish the figure of a man stretched upon the tiller. Yet the whole sight we had of her passed swifter than lightning; the very wave that disclosed her fell burying her for ever; the mingled cry of many voices at the point of death rose and was quenched in the roaring of the Merry Men. And with that the tragedy was at an end. The strong ship, with all her gear, and the lamp perhaps still burning in the cabin, the lives of so many men, precious surely to others, dear, at least, as heaven to themselves, had all, in that one moment, gone down into the surging waters. They were gone like a dream. And the wind still ran and shouted, and the senseless waters in the *Roost* still leaped and tumbled as before.

How long we lay there together, we three, speechless and motionless, is more than I can tell, but it must have been for long. At length, one by one, and almost mechanically, we crawled back into the shelter of the bank. As I lay against the parapet, wholly wretched and not entirely master of my mind, I could hear my kinsman maundering to himself in an altered and melancholy mood. Now he would repeat to himself with maudlin iteration, "Sic a fecht as they had—sic a sair fecht as they had, puir lads, puir lads!" and anon he would bewail that "a' the gear was as gude's tint," because the ship had gone down among the Merry Men instead of stranding on the shore; and throughout, the name—the *Christ-Anna*—would come and go in his divagations, pronounced with shuddering awe. The storm all this time was rapidly abating. In half an hour the wind had fallen to a breeze, and the change was accompanied or caused by a heavy, cold, and plumping rain. I must then have fallen asleep, and when I came to myself, drenched, stiff, and unrefreshed, day had already broken, gray, wet,

discomfortable day; the wind blew in faint and shifting capfuls, the tide was out, the *Roost* was at its lowest, and only the strong beating surf round all the coasts of Aros remained to witness of the furies of the night.

CHAPTER V

A MAN OUT OF THE SEA

Rorie set out for the house in search of warmth and breakfast; but my uncle was bent upon examining the shores of Aros, and I felt it a part of duty to accompany him throughout. He was now docile and quiet, but tremulous and weak in mind and body; and it was with the eagerness of a child that he pursued his exploration. He climbed far down upon the rocks; on the beaches, he pursued the retreating breakers. The merest broken plank or rag of cordage was a treasure in his eyes to be secured at the peril of his life. To see him, with weak and stumbling footsteps, expose himself to the pursuit of the surf, or the snares and pitfalls of the weedy rock, kept me in a perpetual terror. My arm was ready to support him, my hand clutched him by the skirt, I helped him to draw his pitiful discoveries beyond the reach of the returning wave; a nurse accompanying a child of seven would have had no different experience.

Yet, weakened as he was by the reaction from his madness of the night before, the passions that smouldered in his nature were those of a strong man. His terror of the sea, although conquered for the moment, was still undiminished; had the sea been a lake of living flames, he could not have shrunk more panically from its touch; and once, when his foot slipped and he plunged to the midleg into a pool of water, the shriek that came up out of his soul was like the cry of death. He sat still for a while, panting like a dog, after that; but his desire for the spoils of shipwreck triumphed once more over his fears; once more he tottered among the curded foam; once more he crawled upon the rocks among the bursting bubbles; once more his whole heart seemed to be set on driftwood, fit, if it was fit for

anything, to throw upon the fire. Pleased as he was with what he found, he still incessantly grumbled at his ill-fortune.

"Aros," he said, "is no a place for wrecks ava'—no ava'. A' the years I've dwalt here, this ane maks the second; and the best o' the gear clean tint!"

"Uncle," said I, for we were now on a stretch of open sand, where there was nothing to divert his mind, "I saw you last night, as I never thought to see you—you were drunk."

"Na, na," he said, "no as bad as that. I had been drinking, though. And to tell ye the God's truth, it's a thing I cannae mend. There's nae soberer man than me in my ordnar; but when I hear the wind blaw in my lug, it's my belief that I gang gyte."

"You are a religious man," I replied, "and this is sin."

"Ou," he returned, "if it wasnae sin, I dinnae ken that I would care for't. Ye see, man, it's defiance. There's a sair spang o' the auld sin o' the warld in yon sea; it's an unchristian business at the best o't; an' whiles when it gets up, an' the wind skreighs—the wind an' her are a kind of sib, I'm thinkin'—an' thae Merry Men, the daft callants, blawin' and lauchin', and puir souls in the deid thraws warstlin' the leelang nicht wi' their bit ships—weel, it comes ower me like a glamor. I'm a deil, I ken't. But I think naething o' the puir sailor lads; I'm wi' the sea, I'm just like ane o' her ain Merry Men."

I thought I should touch him in a joint of his harness. I turned me toward the sea; the surf was running gayly, wave after wave, with their manes blowing behind them, riding one after another up the beach, towering, curving, falling one upon another on the trampled sand. Without, the salt air, the scared gulls, the widespread army of the sea-chargers, neighing to each other, as they gathered together to the assault of Aros; and close before us, that line on the flat sands that, with all their number and their fury, they might never pass.

"Thus far shalt thou go," said I, "and no farther." And then I quoted as solemnly as I was able a verse that I had often before fitted to the chorus of the breakers—

"But yet the Lord that is on high,
Is more of might by far,
Than noise of many waters is,
As great sea billows are."

"Ay," said my kinsman, "at the hinder end, the Lord will triumph; I dinnae misdoobt that. But here on earth, even silly men foulk daur Him to His face. It is nae wise; I am nae sayin' that it's wise; but it's the pride of the eye, and it's the lust o' life, an' it's the wale o' pleesures."

I said no more, for we had now begun to cross a neck of land that lay between us and Sandag; and I withheld my last appeal to the man's better reason till we should stand upon the spot associated with his crime. Nor did he pursue the subject; but he walked beside me with a firmer step. The call that I had made upon his mind acted like a stimulant, and I could see that he had forgotten his search for worthless jetsam, in a profound, gloomy, and yet stirring train of thought. In three or four minutes we had topped the brae and begun to go down upon Sandag. The wreck had been roughly handled by the sea; the stem had been spun round and dragged a little lower down; and perhaps the stern had been forced a little higher, for the two parts now lay entirely separate on the beach. When we came to the grave I stopped, uncovered my head in the thick rain, and, looking my kinsman in the face, addressed him.

"A man," said I, "was in God's providence suffered to escape from mortal dangers; he was poor, he was naked, he was wet, he was weary, he was a stranger; he had every claim upon the bowels of your compassion; it may be that he was the salt of the earth, holy, helpful, and kind; it may be he was a man laden with iniquities to whom death was the beginning of torment. I ask you in the sight of heaven: Gordon Darnaway, where is the man for whom Christ died?"

He started visibly at the last words; but there came no answer, and his face expressed no feeling but a vague alarm.

"You were my father's brother," I continued; "you have taught me to count your house as if it were my father's house; and we are both sinful men walking before the Lord

among the sins and dangers of this life. It is by our evil that God leads us into good; we sin, I dare not say by His temptation, but I must say with His consent; and to any but the brutish man his sins are the beginning of wisdom. God has warned you by this crime; He warns you still by the bloody grave between our feet; and if there shall follow no repentance, no improvement, no return to Him, what can we look for but the following of some memorable judgment?"

Even as I spoke the words, the eyes of my uncle wandered from my face. A change fell upon his looks that cannot be described; his features seemed to dwindle in size, the color faded from his cheeks, one hand rose waveringly and pointed over my shoulder into the distance, and the oft-repeated name fell once more from his lips: "The *Christ-Anna!*"

I turned; and if I was not appalled to the same degree, as I return thanks to Heaven that I had not the cause, I was still startled by the sight that met my eyes. The form of a man stood upright on the cabin hutch of the wrecked ship; his back was toward us; he appeared to be scanning the offing with shaded eyes, and his figure was relieved to its full height, which was plainly very great, against the sea and sky. I have said a thousand times that I am not superstitious; but at that moment, with my mind running upon death and sin, the unexplained appearance of a stranger on that sea-girt, solitary island filled me with a surprise that bordered close on terror. It seemed scarce possible that any human soul should have come ashore alive in such a sea as had raged last night along the coasts of Aros; and the only vessel within miles had gone down before our eyes among the Merry Men. I was assailed with doubts that made suspense unbearable, and, to put the matter to the touch at once, stepped forward and hailed the figure like a ship.

He turned about, and I thought he started to behold us. At this my courage instantly revived, and I called and signed to him to draw near, and he, on his part, dropped immediately to the sands, and began slowly to approach, with many stops and hesitations. At each repeated mark of the man's uneasiness I grew the more confident myself;

and I advanced another step, encouraging him as I did so with my head and hand. It was plain the castaway had heard indifferent accounts of our island hospitality; and indeed, about this time, the people farther north had a sorry reputation.

"Why," I said, "the man is black!"

And just at that moment, in a voice that I could scarce have recognized, my kinsman began swearing and praying in a mingled stream. I looked at him; he had fallen on his knees, his face was agonized; at each step of the castaway's the pitch of his voice rose, the volubility of his utterance and the fervor of his language redoubled. I call it prayer, for it was addressed to God; but surely no such ranting incongruities were ever before addressed to the Creator by a creature: surely if prayer can be a sin, this mad harangue was sinful. I ran to my kinsman, I seized him by the shoulders, I dragged him to his feet.

"Silence, man," said I, "respect your God in words, if not in action. Here, on the very scene of your transgressions, He sends you an occasion of atonement. Forward and embrace it; welcome like a father yon creature who comes trembling to your mercy."

With that, I tried to force him toward the black; but he felled me to the ground, burst from my grasp, leaving the shoulder of his jacket, and fled up the hill-side toward the top of Aros like a deer. I staggered to my feet again, bruised and somewhat stunned; the negro had paused in surprise, perhaps in terror, some halfway between me and the wreck; my uncle was already far away, bounding from rock to rock; and I thus found myself torn for a time between two duties. But I judged, and I pray Heaven that I judged rightly, in favor of the poor wretch upon the sands; his misfortune was at least not plainly of his own creation; it was one, besides, that I could certainly relieve; and I had begun by that time to regard my uncle as an incurable and dismal lunatic. I advanced accordingly toward the black, who now awaited my approach with folded arms, like one prepared for either destiny. As I came nearer, he reached forth his hand with a great gesture, such as I had seen from the pulpit, and spoke to me in something of a pulpit voice, but not a word was comprehensible. I tried him first in

English, then in Gaelic, both in vain; so that it was clear we must rely upon the tongue of looks and gestures. Thereupon I signed to him to follow me, which he did readily and with a grave obeisance like a fallen king; all the while there had come no shade of alteration in his face, neither of anxiety while he was still waiting, nor of relief now that he was reassured; if he were a slave, as I supposed, I could not but judge he must have fallen from some high place in his own country, and fallen as he was, I could not but admire his bearing. As we passed the grave, I paused and raised my hands and eyes to heaven in token of respect and sorrow for the dead; and he, as if in answer, bowed low and spread his hands abroad; it was a strange motion, but done like a thing of common custom; and I supposed it was ceremonial in the land from which he came. At the same time he pointed to my uncle, whom we could just see perched upon a knoll, and touched his head to indicate that he was mad.

We took the long way round the shore, for I feared to excite my uncle if we struck across the island; and as we walked, I had time enough to mature the little dramatic exhibition by which I hoped to satisfy my doubts. Accordingly, pausing on a rock, I proceeded to imitate before the negro the action of the man whom I had seen the day before taking bearings with the compass at Sandag. He understood me at once, and, taking the imitation out of my hands, showed me where the boat was, pointed out seaward as if to indicate the position of the schooner, and then down along the edge of the rock with the words *Espirito Santo,* strangely pronounced, but clear enough for recognition. I had thus been right in my conjecture; the pretended historical inquiry had been but a cloak for treasure hunting; the man who had played Dr. Robertson was the same as the foreigner who visited Grisapol in spring, and now, with many others, lay dead under the *Roost* of Aros: there had their greed brought them, there should their bones be tossed for evermore. In the meantime the black continued his imitation of the scene, now looking up skyward as though watching the approach of the storm; now, in the character of a seaman, waving the rest to come aboard; now as an officer, running along the rock and entering the boat; and anon

bending over imaginary oars with the air of a hurried boatman; but all with the same solemnity of manner, so that I was never even moved to smile. Lastly, he indicated to me, by a pantomime not to be described in words, how he himself had gone up to examine the stranded wreck, and, to his grief and indignation, had been deserted by his comrades; and thereupon folded his arms once more, and stooped his head, like one accepting fate.

The mystery of his presence being thus solved for me, I explained to him by means of a sketch the fate of the vessel and of all aboard her. He showed no surprise nor sorrow, and, with a sudden lifting of his open hand, seemed to dismiss his former friends or masters (whichever they had been) into God's pleasure. Respect came upon me and grew stronger, the more I observed him; I saw he had a powerful mind and a sober and severe character, such as I loved to commune with; and before we reached the house of Aros I had almost forgotten, and wholly forgiven him, his uncanny color.

To Mary I told all that had passed without suppression, though I own my heart failed me; but I did wrong to doubt her sense of justice.

"You did the right," she said. "God's will be done." And she set out meat for us at once.

As soon as I was satisfied, I bade Rorie keep an eye upon the castaway, who was still eating, and set forth again myself to find my uncle. I had not gone far before I saw him sitting in the same place, upon the very topmost knoll, and seemingly in the same attitude as when I had last observed him. From that point, as I have said, the most of Aros and the neighboring Ross would be spread below him like a map; and it was plain that he kept a bright look-out in all directions, for my head had scarcely risen above the summit of the first ascent before he had leaped to his feet and turned as if to face me. I hailed him at once, as well as I was able, in the same tones and words as I had often used before, when I had come to summon him to dinner. He made not so much as a movement in reply. I passed on a little farther, and again tried parley, with the same result. But when I began a second time to advance, his insane fears blazed up again, and still in dead silence, but with

incredible speed, he began to flee from before me along the rocky summit of the hill. An hour before, he had been dead weary, and I had been comparatively active. But now his strength was recruited by the fervor of insanity, and it would have been vain for me to dream of pursuit. Nay, the very attempt, I thought, might have inflamed his terrors, and thus increased the miseries of our position. And I had nothing left but to turn homeward and make my sad report to Mary.

She heard it, as she had heard the first, with a concerned composure, and, bidding me lie down and take that rest of which I stood so much in need, set forth herself in quest of her misguided father. At that age it would have been a strange thing that put me from either meat or sleep; I slept long and deep; and it was already long past noon before I awoke and came downstairs into the kitchen. Mary, Rorie, and the black castaway were seated about the fire in silence; and I could see that Mary had been weeping. There was cause enough, as I soon learned, for tears. First she, and then Rorie, had been forth to seek my uncle; each in turn had found him perched upon the hill-top, and from each in turn he had silently and swiftly fled. Rorie had tried to chase him, but in vain; madness lent a new vigor to his bounds; he sprang from rock to rock over the widest gullies; he scoured like the wind along the hill-tops; he doubled and twisted like a hare before the dogs; and Rorie at length gave in; and the last that he saw, my uncle was seated as before upon the crest of Aros. Even during the hottest excitement of the chase, even when the fleet-footed servant had come, for a moment, very near to capture him, the poor lunatic had uttered not a sound. He fled, and he was silent, like a beast; and this silence had terrified his pursuer.

There was something heart-breaking in the situation. How to capture the madman, how to feed him in the meanwhile, and what to do with him when he was captured, were the three difficulties that we had to solve.

"The black," said I, "is the cause of this attack. It may even be his presence in the house that keeps my uncle on the hill. We have done the fair thing; he has been fed and warmed under this roof; now I propose that Rorie put him

across the bay in the coble, and take him through the Ross as far as Grisapol."

In this proposal Mary heartily concurred; and bidding the black follow us, we all three descended to the pier. Certainly, Heaven's will was declared against Gordon Darnaway; a thing had happened, never paralleled before in Aros; during the storm, the coble had broken loose, and, striking on the rough splinters of the pier, now lay in four feet of water with one side stove in. Three days of work at least would be required to make her float. But I was not to be beaten. I led the whole party round to where the gut was narrowest, swam to the other side, and called to the black to follow me. He signed, with the same clearness and quiet as before, that he knew not the art; and there was truth apparent in his signals, it would have occurred to none of us to doubt his truth; and that hope being over, we must all go back even as we came to the house of Aros, the negro walking in our midst without embarrassment.

All we could do that day was to make one more attempt to communicate with the unhappy madman. Again he was visible on his perch; again he fled in silence. But food and a great cloak were at least left for his comfort; the rain, besides, had cleared away, and the night promised to be even warm. We might compose ourselves, we thought, until the morrow; rest was the chief requisite, that we might be strengthened for unusual exertions; and as none cared to talk, we separated at an early hour.

I lay long awake, planning a campaign for the morrow. I was to place the black on the side of Sandag, whence he should head my uncle toward the house; Rorie in the west, I on the east, were to complete the cordon, as best we might. It seemed to me, the more I recalled the configuration of the island, that it should be possible, though hard, to force him down upon the low ground along Aros Bay; and once there, even with the strength of his madness, ultimate escape was hardly to be feared. It was on his terror of the black that I relied; for I made sure, however he might run, it would not be in the direction of the man whom he supposed to have returned from the dead, and thus one point of the compass at least would be secure.

When at length I fell asleep, it was to be awakened

shortly after by a dream of wrecks, black men, and submarine adventure; and I found myself so shaken and fevered that I arose, descended the stair, and stepped out before the house. Within, Rorie and the black were asleep together in the kitchen; outside was a wonderful clear night of stars, with here and there a cloud still hanging, last stragglers of the tempest. It was near the top of the flood, and the Merry Men were roaring in the windless quiet of the night. Never, not even in the height of the tempest, had I heard their song with greater awe. Now, when the winds were gathered home, when the deep was dandling itself back into its summer slumber, and when the stars rained their gentle light over land and sea, the voice of these tide-breakers was still raised for havoc. They seemed, indeed, to be a part of the world's evil and the tragic side of life. Nor were their meaningless vociferations the only sounds that broke the silence of the night. For I could hear, now shrill and thrilling and now almost drowned, the note of a human voice that accompanied the uproar of the *Roost*. I knew it for my kinsman's; and a great fear fell upon me of God's judgments, and the evil in the world. I went back again into the darkness of the house as into a place of shelter, and lay long upon my bed, pondering these mysteries.

It was late when I again woke, and I leaped into my clothes and hurried to the kitchen. No one was there; Rorie and the black had both stealthily departed long before; and my heart stood still at the discovery. I could rely on Rorie's heart, but I placed no trust in his discretion. If he had thus set out without a word, he was plainly bent upon some service to my uncle. But what service could he hope to render even alone, far less in the company of the man in whom my uncle found his fears incarnated? Even if I were not already too late to prevent some deadly mischief, it was plain I must delay no longer. With the thought I was out of the house; and often as I have run on the rough sides of Aros, I never ran as I did that fatal morning. I do not believe I put twelve minutes to the whole ascent.

My uncle was gone from his perch. The basket had indeed been torn open and the meat scattered on the turf; but, as we found afterward, no mouthful had been tasted; and there was not another trace of human existence in that

wide field of view. Day had already filled the clear heavens; the sun already lighted in a rosy bloom upon the crest of Ben Kyaw; but all below me the rude knolls of Aros and the shield of the sea lay steeped in the clear darkling twilight of the dawn.

"Rorie!" I cried; and again "Rorie!" My voice died in the silence, but there came no answer back. If there were indeed an enterprise afoot to catch my uncle, it was plainly not in fleetness of foot, but in dexterity of stalking, that the hunters placed their trust. I ran on farther, keeping the higher spurs, and looking right and left, nor did I pause again till I was on the mount above Sandag. I could see the wreck, the uncovered belt of sand, the waves idly beating, the long ledge of rocks, and on either hand the tumbled knolls, boulders, and gullies of the island. But still no human thing.

At a stride the sunshine fell on Aros, and the shadows and colors leaped into being. Not half a moment later, below me to the west, sheep began to scatter as in a panic. There came a cry. I saw my uncle running. I saw the black jump up in hot pursuit; and before I had time to understand, Rorie also had appeared, calling directions in Gaelic as to a dog herding sheep.

I took to my heels to interfere, and perhaps I had done better to have waited where I was, for I was the means of cutting off the madman's last escape. There was nothing before him from that moment but the grave, the wreck, and the sea in Sandag Bay. And yet Heaven knows that what I did was for the best.

My Uncle Gordon saw in what direction, horrible to him, the chase was driving him. He doubled, darting to the right and left; but high as the fever ran in his veins, the black was still the swifter. Turn where he would, he was still forestalled, still driven toward the scene of his crime. Suddenly he began to shriek aloud, so that the coast reëchoed; and now both I and Rorie were calling on the black to stop. But all was vain, for it was written otherwise. The pursuer still ran, the chase still sped before him screaming; they avoided the grave, and skimmed close past the timbers of the wreck; in a breath they had cleared the sand; and still my kinsman did not pause, but dashed straight into

the surf; and the black, now almost within reach, still followed swiftly behind him. Rorie and I both stopped, for the thing was now beyond the hands of men, and these were the decrees of God that came to pass before our eyes. There was never a sharper ending. On that steep beach they were beyond their depth at a bound; neither could swim; the black rose once for a moment with a throttling cry; but the current had them, racing seaward; and if ever they came up again, which God alone can tell, it would be ten minutes after, at the far end of Aros Roost, where the seabirds hover fishing.

BROOKSMITH [1]

By HENRY JAMES (1843-)

(From "The Lesson of the Master and Other Stories," 1891)

A modern critic calls Henry James "A cosmopolitan Puritan, an urbane student of souls."

One recognizes his cosmopolitanism in this study of Brooksmith, for with his perfect understanding of the English point of view of servant and master he combines an externality of judgment that is not English, neither is it American. He is above either the condemnation or approval that springs from sectionalism. He examines the contrasts of ranks, sets out the refined and the vulgar in society, and presents you a delicate sympathetic study of psychological values in this man's soul, so that your conflict of understanding produces the story interest in a one-figure story, absolutely unique. It is an admirable example of Henry James's mastery in souls and of his subtlety of expression.

We are scattered now, the friends of the late Mr. Oliver Offord; but whenever we chance to meet I think we are conscious of a certain esoteric respect for each other. "Yes, you, too, have been in Arcadia," we seem not too grumpily to allow. When I pass the house in Mansfield Street I re-

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member that Arcadia was there. I don't know who has it now, and don't want to know; it's enough to be so sure that if I should ring the bell there would be no such luck for me as that Brooksmith should open the door. Mr. Offord, the most agreeable, the most attaching of bachelors, was a retired diplomatist, living on his pension and on something of his own over and above; a good deal confined, by his infirmities, to his fireside and delighted to be found there any afternoon in the year, from five o'clock on, by such visitors as Brooksmith allowed to come up. Brooksmith was his butler and his most intimate friend, to whom we all stood, or I should say sat, in the same relation in which the subject of the sovereign finds himself to the prime minister. By having been for years, in foreign lands, the most delightful Englishman anyone had ever known, Mr. Offord had in my opinion rendered signal service to his country. But I suppose he had been too much liked—liked even by those who didn't like *it*—so that as people of that sort never get titles or dotations for the horrid things they've *not* done, his principal reward was simply that we went to see him.

Oh, we went perpetually, and it was not our fault if he was not overwhelmed with this particular honor. Any visitor who came once came again; to come merely once was a slight nobody, I'm sure, had ever put upon him. His circle therefore was essentially composed of habitués, who were habitués for each other as well as for him, as those of a happy salon should be. I remember vividly every element of the place, down to the intensely Londonish look of the gray opposite houses, in the gap of the white curtains of the high windows, and the exact spot where, on a particular afternoon, I put down my teacup for Brooksmith, lingering an instant, to gather it up as if he were plucking a flower. Mr. Offord's drawing-room was indeed Brooksmith's garden, his pruned and tended human parterre, and if we all flourished there and grew well in our places it was largely owing to his supervision.

Many persons have heard much, though most have doubtless seen little, of the famous institution of the salon, and many are born to the depression of knowing that this finest flower of social life refuses to bloom where the English

tongue is spoken. The explanation is usually that our women have not the skill to cultivate it—the art to direct through a smiling land, between suggestive shores, a sinuous stream of talk. My affectionate, my pious memory of Mr. Offord contradicts this induction only, I fear, more insidiously to confirm it. The sallow and slightly smoked drawing-room in which he spent so large a portion of the last years of his life certainly deserved the distinguished name; but on the other hand it couldn't be said at all to owe its stamp to any intervention throwing into relief the fact that there was no Mrs. Offord. The dear man had indeed, at the most, been capable of one of those sacrifices to which women are deemed peculiarly apt: he had recognized—under the influence, in some degree, it is true, of physical infirmity—that if you wish people to find you at home you must manage not to be out. He had, in short, accepted the truth which many dabblers in the social art are slow to learn, that you must really, as they say, take a line, and that the only way as yet discovered of being at home is to stay at home. Finally his own fireside had become a summary of his habits. Why should he ever have left it?—since this would have been leaving what was notoriously pleasantest in London, the compact charmed cluster (thinning away indeed into casual couples) round the fine old last century chimney-piece which, with the exception of the remarkable collection of miniatures, was the best thing the place contained. Mr. Offord wasn't rich; he had nothing but his pension and the use for life of the somewhat superannuated house.

When I'm reminded by some opposed discomfort of the present hour how perfectly we were all handled there, I ask myself once more what had been the secret of such perfection. One had taken it for granted at the time, for anything that is supremely good produces more acceptance than surprise. I felt we were all happy, but I didn't consider how our happiness was managed. And yet there were questions to be asked, questions that strike me as singularly obvious now that there's nobody to answer them. Mr. Offord had solved the insoluble; he had, without feminine help—save in the sense that ladies were dying to come to him and that he saved the lives of several—established a salon; but I might have guessed that there was a method

in his madness, a law in his success. He hadn't hit it off by a mere fluke. There was an art in it all, and how was the art so hidden? Who, indeed, if it came to that was the occult artist? Launching this inquiry the other day, I had already got hold of the tail of my reply. I was helped by the very wonder of some of the conditions that came back to me—those that used to seem as natural as sunshine in a fine climate.

How was it, for instance, that we never were a crowd, never either too many or too few, always the right people *with* the right people—there must really have been no wrong people at all—always coming and going, never sticking fast nor overstaying, yet never popping in or out with an indecorous familiarity? How was it that we all sat where we wanted, and moved when we wanted, and met whom we wanted, and escaped whom we wanted; joining, according to the accident of inclination, the general circle or falling in with a single talker on a convenient sofa? Why were all the sofas so convenient, accidents so happy, the talkers so ready, the listeners so willing, the subjects presented to you in a rotation as quickly foreordained as the courses at dinner? A dearth of topics would have been as unheard of as a lapse in the service. These speculations couldn't fail to lead me to the fundamental truth that Brooksmith had been somehow at the bottom of the mystery. If he hadn't established the salon at least he had carried it on. Brooksmith, in short, was the artist!

We felt this covertly at the time, without formulating it, and were conscious, as an ordered and prosperous community, of his even-handed justice, all untainted with flunkeyism. He had none of that vulgarity—his touch was infinitely fine. The delicacy of it was clear to me on the first occasion my eyes rested, as they were so often to rest again, on the domestic revealed, in the turbid light of the street, by the opening of the house door. I saw on the spot that though he had plenty of school he carried it without arrogance—he had remained articulate and human. *L'École Anglaise,* Mr. Offord used laughingly to call him when, later on, it happened more than once that we had some conversation about him. But I remember accusing Mr. Offord of not doing him quite ideal justice. That he wasn't one of

the giants of the school, however, was admitted by my old friend, who really understood him perfectly and was devoted to him, as I shall show; which doubtless poor Brooksmith had himself felt, to his cost, when his value in the market was originally determined. The utility of his class in general is estimated by the foot and the inch, and poor Brooksmith had only about five feet three to put into circulation. He acknowledged the inadequacy of this provision, and I'm sure was penetrated with the everlasting fitness of the relation between service and stature. If *he* had been Mr. Offord he certainly would have found Brooksmith wanting, and, indeed, the laxity of his employer on this score was one of the many things he had had to condone and to which he had at last indulgently adapted himself.

I remember the old man's saying to me: "Oh, my servants, if they can live with me a fortnight they can live with me forever. But it's the first fortnight that tries 'em." It was in the first fortnight, for instance, that Brooksmith had had to learn that he was exposed to being addressed as "my dear fellow" and "my poor child." Strange and deep must such a probation have been to him, and he doubtless emerged from it tempered and purified. This was written to a certain extent in his appearance; in his spare brisk little person, in his cloistered white face and extraordinarily polished hair, which told of responsibility, looked as if it were kept up to the same high standard as the plate; in his small, clear, anxious eyes, even in the permitted, though not exactly encouraged, tuft on his chin. "He thinks me rather mad, but I've broken him in, and now he likes the place, he likes the company," said the old man. I embraced this fully after I had become aware that Brooksmith's main characteristic was a deep and shy refinement, though I remember I was rather puzzled when, on another occasion, Mr. Offord remarked: "What he likes is the talk—mingling in the conversation." I was conscious I had never seen Brooksmith permit himself this freedom, but I guessed in a moment that what Mr. Offord alluded to was a participation more intense than any speech could have represented —that of being perpetually present on a hundred legitimate pretexts, errands, necessities, and breathing the very atmosphere of criticism, the famous criticism of life. "Quite

an education, sir, isn't it, sir?" he said to me one day at the foot of the stairs when he was letting me out; and I've always remembered the words and the tone as the first sign of the quickening drama of poor Brooksmith's fate. It was indeed an education, but to what was this sensitive young man of thirty-five, of the servile class, being educated?

Practically and inevitably, for the time, to companionship, to the perpetual, the even exaggerated reference and appeal of a person brought to dependence by his time of life and his infirmities and always addicted moreover—this was the exaggeration—to the art of giving you pleasure by letting you do things for him. There were certain things Mr. Offord was capable of pretending he liked you to do even when he didn't—this, I mean, if he thought *you* liked them. If it happened that you didn't either—which was rare, yet might be—of course there were cross-purposes; but Brooksmith was there to prevent their going very far. This was precisely the way he acted as moderator; he averted misunderstandings or cleared them up. He had been capable, strange as it may appear, of acquiring for this purpose an insight into the French tongue, which was often used at Mr. Offord's; for besides being habitual to most of the foreigners, and they were many, who haunted the place or arrived with letters—letters often requiring a little worried consideration, of which Brooksmith always had cognizance —it had really become the primary language of the master of the house. I don't know if all the *malentendus* were in French, but almost all the explanations were, and this didn't a bit prevent Brooksmith's following them. I know Mr. Offord used to read passages to him from Montaigne and Saint-Simon, for he read perpetually when alone—when *they* were alone, that is—and Brooksmith was always about. Perhaps you'll say no wonder Mr. Offord's butler regarded him as "rather mad." However, if I'm not sure what he thought about Montaigne, I'm convinced he admired Saint-Simon. A certain feeling for letters must have rubbed off on him from the mere handling of his master's books, which he was always carrying to and fro and putting back in their places.

I often noticed that if an anecdote or a quotation, much more a lively discussion, was going forward, he would, if

busy with the fire or the curtains, the lamp or the tea, find a pretext for remaining in the room till the point should be reached. If his purpose was to catch it you weren't discreet, you were in fact scarce human, to call him off, and I shall never forget a look, a hard stony stare—I caught it in its passage—which, one day when there were a good many people in the room, he fastened upon the footman who was helping him in the service and who, in an undertone, had asked him some irrelevant question. It was the only manifestation of harshness I ever observed on Brooksmith's part, and I at first wondered what was the matter. Then I became conscious that Mr. Offord was relating a very curious anecdote, never before perhaps made so public, and imparted to the narrator by an eyewitness of the fact, bearing on Lord Byron's life in Italy. Nothing would induce me to reproduce it here, but Brooksmith had been in danger of losing it. If I ever should venture to reproduce it I shall feel how much I lose in not having my fellow auditor to refer to.

The first day Mr. Offord's door was closed was therefore a dark date in contemporary history. It was raining hard and my umbrella was wet, but Brooksmith received it from me exactly as if this were a preliminary for going upstairs. I observed, however, that instead of putting it away he held it poised and trickling over the rug, and I then became aware that he was looking at me with deep acknowledging eyes—his air of universal responsibility. I immediately understood—there was scarce need of question and answer as they passed between us. When I took in that our good friend had given up as never before, though only for the occasion, I exclaimed dolefully: "What a difference it will make—and to how many people!"

"I shall be one of them, sir!" said Brooksmith; and that was the beginning of the end.

Mr. Offord came down again, but the spell was broken, the great sign being that the conversation was for the first time not directed. It wandered and stumbled, a little frightened, like a lost child—it had let go the nurse's hand. "The worst of it is that now we shall talk about my health—*c'est la fin de tout,*" Mr. Offord said when he reappeared; and then I recognized what a note of change that would

be—for he had never tolerated anything so provincial. We "ran" to each other's health as little as to the daily weather. The talk became ours, in a word—not his; and as ours, even when *he* talked, it could only be inferior. In this form it was a distress to Brooksmith, whose attention now wandered from it altogether: he had so much closer a vision of his master's intimate conditions than our superficialities represented. There were better hours, and he was more in and out of the room, but I could see he was conscious of the decline, almost of the collapse, of our great institution. He seemed to wish to take counsel with me about it, to feel responsible for its going on in some form or other. When for the second period—the first had lasted several days—he had to tell me that his employer didn't receive, I half expected to hear him say after a moment, "Do you think I ought to, sir, in his place?"—as he might have asked me, with the return of autumn, if I thought he had better light the drawing-room fire.

He had a resigned philosophic sense of what his guests—our guests, as I came to regard them in our colloquies—would expect. His feeling was that he wouldn't absolutely have approved of himself as a substitute for Mr. Offord; but he was so saturated with the religion of habit that he would have made, for our friends, the necessary sacrifice to the divinity. He would take them on a little further and till they could look about them. I think I saw him also mentally confronted with the opportunity to deal—for once in his life—with some of his own dumb preferences, his limitations of sympathy, *weeding* a little in prospect and returning to a purer tradition. It was not unknown to me that he considered that toward the end of our host's career a certain laxity of selection had crept in.

At last it came to be the case that we all found the closed door more often than the open one; but even when it was closed Brooksmith managed a crack for me to squeeze through, so that practically I never turned away without having paid a visit. The difference simply came to be that the visit was to Brooksmith. It took place in the hall, at the familiar foot of the stairs, and we didn't sit down, at least Brooksmith didn't; moreover, it was devoted wholly to one topic and always had the air of being already over—

beginning, so to say, at the end. But it was always interesting—it always gave me something to think about. It's true that the subject of my meditation was ever the same—ever "It's all very well, but what *will* become of Brooksmith?" Even my private answer to this question left me still unsatisfied. No doubt Mr. Offord would provide for him, but *what* would he provide?—that was the great point. He couldn't provide society; and society had become a necessity of Brooksmith's nature. I must add that he never showed a symptom of what I may call sordid solicitude—anxiety on his own account. He was rather livid and intensely grave, as befitted a man before whose eyes the "shade of that which once was great" was passing away. He had the solemnity of a person winding up, under depressing circumstances, a long-established and celebrated business; he was a kind of social executor or liquidator. But his manner seemed to testify exclusively to the uncertainty of *our* future. I couldn't in those days have afforded it—I lived in two rooms in Jermyn Street and didn't "keep a man"; but even if my income had permitted I shouldn't have ventured to say to Brooksmith (emulating Mr. Offord), "My dear fellow, I'll take you on." The whole tone of our intercourse was so much more an implication that it was *I* who should now want a lift. Indeed there was a tacit assurance in Brooksmith's whole attitude that he should have me on his mind.

One of the most assiduous members of our circle had been Lady Kenyon, and I remember his telling me one day that her ladyship had, in spite of her own infirmities, lately much aggravated, been in person to inquire. In answer to this I remarked that she would feel it more than anyone. Brooksmith had a pause before saying in a certain tone—there's no reproducing some of his tones—"I'll go and see her." I went to see her myself and learned he had waited on her; but when I said to her, in the form of a joke but with a core of earnest, that when all was over some of us ought to combine, to club together, and set Brooksmith up on his own account, she replied a trifle disappointingly: "Do you mean in a public house?" I looked at her in a way that I think Brooksmith himself would have approved, and then I answered: "Yes, the Offord Arms." What I had

meant, of course, was that for the love of art itself we ought to look to it that such a peculiar faculty and so much acquired experience shouldn't be wasted. I really think that if we had caused a few black-edged cards to be struck off and circulated—"Mr. Brooksmith will continue to receive on the old premises from four to seven; business carried on as usual during the alterations"—the greater number of us would have rallied.

Several times he took me upstairs—always by his own proposal—and our dear old friend, in bed (in a curious flowered and brocaded *casaque* which made him, especially as his head was tied up in a handkerchief to match, look, to my imagination, like the dying Voltaire), held for ten minutes a sadly shrunken little salon. I felt, indeed, each time as if I were attending the last *coucher* of some social sovereign. He was royally whimsical about his sufferings and not at all concerned—quite as if the Constitution provided for the case—about his successor. He glided over *our* sufferings charmingly, and none of his jokes—it was a gallant abstention, some of them would have been so easy—were at our expense. Now and again, I confess, there was one at Brooksmith's, but so pathetically sociable as to make the excellent man look at me in a way that seemed to say: "Do exchange a glance with me, or I shan't be able to stand it." What he wasn't able to stand was not what Mr. Offord said about him, but what he wasn't able to say in return. His idea of conversation for himself was giving you the convenience of speaking to him; and when he went to "see" Lady Kenyon, for instance, it was to carry her the tribute of his receptive silence. Where would the speech of his betters have been if proper service had been a manifestation of sound? In that case the fundamental difference would have had to be shown by *their* dumbness, and many of them, poor things, were dumb enough without that provision. Brooksmith took an unfailing interest in the preservation of the fundamental difference; it was the thing he had most on his conscience.

What had become of it, however, when Mr. Offord passed away like any inferior person, was relegated to eternal stillness after the manner of a butler above stairs? His aspect on the event—for the several successive days—may

be imagined, and the multiplication by funeral observance of the things he didn't say. When everything was over—it was late the same day—I knocked at the door of the house of mourning as I so often had done before. I could never call on Mr. Offord again, but I had come literally to call on Brooksmith. I wanted to ask him if there was anything I could do for him, tainted with vagueness as this inquiry could only be. My presumptuous dream of taking him into my own service had died away: my service wasn't worth his being taken into. My offer could only be to help him to find another place, and yet there was an indelicacy, as it were, in taking for granted that his thoughts would immediately be fixed on another. I had a hope that he would be able to give his life a different form—though certainly not the form, the frequent result of such bereavements, of his setting up a little shop. That would have been dreadful; for I should have wished to forward any enterprise he might embark in, yet how could I have brought myself to go and pay him shillings and take back coppers over a counter? My visit then was simply an intended compliment. He took it as such, gratefully and with all the tact in the world. He knew I really couldn't help him, and that I knew he knew I couldn't; but we discussed the situation—with a good deal of elegant generality—at the foot of the stairs, in the hall already dismantled, where I had so often discussed other situations with him. The executors were in possession, as was still more apparent when he made me pass for a few minutes into the dining-room, where various objects were muffled up for removal.

Two definite facts, however, he had to communicate; one being that he was to leave the house forever that night (servants, for some mysterious reason, seem always to depart by night), and the other—he mentioned it only at the last and with hesitation—that he was already aware his late master had left him a legacy of eighty pounds. "I'm very glad," I said, and Brooksmith was of the same mind: "It was so like him to think of me." This was all that passed between us on the subject, and I know nothing of his judgment of Mr. Offord's memento. Eighty pounds are always eighty pounds, and no one has ever left *me* an equal sum; but, all the same, for Brooksmith, I was disappointed. I

don't know what I had expected, but it was almost a shock. Eighty pounds might stock a small shop—a *very* small shop; but, I repeat, I couldn't bear to think of that. I asked my friend if he had been able to save a little, and he replied: "No, sir; I've had to do things." I didn't inquire what things they might have been; they were his own affair, and I took his word for them as assentingly as if he had had the greatness of an ancient house to keep up; especially as there was something in his manner that seemed to convey a prospect of further sacrifice.

"I shall have to turn round a bit, sir—I shall have to look about me," he said; and then he added indulgently, magnanimously: "If you should happen to hear of anything for me——"

I couldn't let him finish; this was, in its essence, too much in the really grand manner. It would be a help to my getting him off my mind to be able to pretend I *could* find the right place, and that help he wished to give me, for it was doubtless painful to him to see me in so false a position. I interposed with a few words to the effect of how well aware I was that wherever he should go, whatever he should do, he would miss our old friend terribly—miss him even more than I should, having been with him so much more. This led him to make the speech that has remained with me as the very text of the whole episode.

"Oh, sir, it's sad for *you,* very sad indeed, and for a great many gentlemen and ladies; that it is, sir. But for me, sir, it is, if I may say so, still graver even than that: it's just the loss of something that was everything. For me, sir," he went on with rising tears, "he was just *all,* if you know what I mean, sir. You have others, sir, I dare say—not that I would have you understand me to speak of them as in any way tantamount. But you have the pleasures of society, sir; if it's only in talking about him, sir, as I dare say you do freely—for all his blest memory has to fear from it—with gentlemen and ladies who have had the same honor. That's not for me, sir, and I've to keep my associations to myself. Mr. Offord was *my* society, and now, you see, I just haven't any. You go back to conversation, sir, after all, and I go back to my place," Brooksmith stammered, without exaggerated irony or dramatic bitterness,

but with a flat unstudied veracity and his hand on the knob of the street door. He turned it to let me out and then he added: "I just go downstairs, sir, again, and I stay there."

"My poor child," I replied in my emotion, quite as Mr. Offord used to speak, "my dear fellow, leave it to me: *we'll* look after you, we'll all do something for you."

"Ah, if you could give me some one *like* him! But there ain't two such in the world," Brooksmith said as we parted.

He had given me his address—the place where he would be to be heard of. For a long time I had no occasion to make use of the information: he proved on trial so very difficult a case. The people who knew him and had known Mr. Offord didn't want to take him, and yet I couldn't bear to try to thrust him among strangers—strangers to his past when not to his present. I spoke to many of our old friends about him and found them all governed by an odd mixture of feelings of which I myself was conscious—as well as disposed, further, to entertain a suspicion that he was "spoiled," with which I then would have nothing to do. In plain terms a certain embarrassment, a sensible awkwardness when they thought of it, attached to the idea of using him as a menial: they had met him so often in society. Many of them would have asked him, and did ask him, or rather did ask me to ask him, to come and see them; but a mere visiting list was not what I wanted for him. He was too short for people who were very particular; nevertheless I heard of an opening in a diplomatic household which led me to write him a note, though I was looking much less for something grand than for something human. Five days later I heard from him. The secretary's wife had decided, after keeping him waiting till then, that she couldn't take a servant out of a house in which there hadn't been a lady. The note had a P. S.: "It's a good job there wasn't, sir, such a lady as some."

A week later he came to see me and told me he was "suited," committed to some highly respectable people—they were something quite immense in the city—who lived on the Bayswater side of the park. "I dare say it will be rather poor, sir," he admitted; "but I've seen fireworks, haven't I, sir?—it can't be fireworks *every* night. After Mansfield Street there ain't much choice." There was a certain amount,

however, it seemed; for the following year, calling one day on a country cousin, a lady of a certain age who was spending a fortnight in town with some friends of her own, a family unknown to me and resident in Chester Square, the door of the house was opened, to my surprise and gratification, by Brooksmith in person. When I came out I had some conversation with him from which I gathered that he had found the large city people too dull for endurance, and I guessed, though he didn't say it, that he had found them vulgar as well. I don't know what judgment he would have passed on his actual patrons if my relative hadn't been their friend; but in view of that connection he abstained from comment.

None was necessary, however, for before the lady in question brought her visit to a close they honored me with an invitation to dinner, which I accepted. There was a largish party on the occasion, but I confess I thought of Brooksmith rather more than of the seated company. They required no depth of attention—they were all referable to usual irredeemable inevitable types. It was the world of cheerful commonplace and conscious gentility and prosperous density, a full-fed material insular world, a world of hideous florid plate and ponderous order and thin conversation. There wasn't a word said about Byron, or even about a minor bard then much in view. Nothing would have induced me to look at Brooksmith in the course of the repast, and I felt sure that not even my overturning the wine would have induced him to meet my eye. We were in the intellectual sympathy—we felt, as regards each other, a degree of social responsibility. In short, we had been in Arcadia together, and we had both come to *this!* No wonder we were ashamed to be confronted. When he had helped on my overcoat, as I was going away, we parted, for the first time since the earliest days of Mansfield Street, in silence. I thought he looked lean and wasted, and I guessed that his new place wasn't more "human" than his previous one. There was plenty of beef and beer, but there was no reciprocity. The question for him to have asked before accepting the position wouldn't have been, "How many footmen are kept?" but "How much imagination?"

The next time I went to the house—I confess it wasn't

very soon—I encountered his successor, a personage who evidently enjoyed the good fortune of never having quitted his natural level. Could any be higher? he seemed to ask—over the heads of three footmen and even of some visitors. He made me feel as if Brooksmith were dead; but I didn't dare to inquire—I couldn't have borne his "I haven't the least idea, sir." I dispatched a note to the address that worthy had given me after Mr. Offord's death, but I received no answer. Six months later, however, I was favored with a visit from an elderly, dreary, dingy person who introduced herself to me as Mr. Brooksmith's aunt and from whom I learned that he was out of place and out of health and had allowed her to come and say to me that if I could spare half an hour to look in at him he would take it as a rare honor.

I went the next day—his messenger had given me a new address—and found my friend lodged in a short sordid street in Marylebone, one of those corners of London that wear the last expression of sickly meanness. The room into which I was shown was above the small establishment of a dyer and cleaner who had inflated kid gloves and discolored shawls in his shop-front. There was a great deal of grimy infant life up and down the place, and there was a hot, moist smell within, as of the "boiling" of dirty linen. Brooksmith sat with a blanket over his legs at a clean little window where, from behind stiff bluish-white curtains, he could look across at a huckster's and a tinsmith's and a small greasy public house. He had passed through an illness and was convalescent, and his mother, as well as his aunt, was in attendance on him. I liked the nearer relative, who was bland and intensely humble, but I had my doubts of the remoter, whom I connected perhaps unjustly with the opposite public house—she seemed somehow greasy with the same grease—and whose furtive eye followed every movement of my hand as to see if it weren't going into my pocket. It didn't take this direction—I couldn't, unsolicited, put myself at that sort of ease with Brooksmith. Several times the door of the room opened and mysterious old women peeped in and shuffled back again. I don't know who they were; poor Brooksmith seemed encompassed with vague prying, beery females.

He was vague himself, and evidently weak, and much embarrassed, and not an allusion was made between us to Mansfield Street. The vision of the salon of which he had been an ornament hovered before me, however, by contrast, sufficiently. He assured me he was really getting better, and his mother remarked that he would come round if he could only get his spirits up. The aunt echoed this opinion, and I became more sure that in her own case she knew where to go for such a purpose. I'm afraid I was rather weak with my old friend, for I neglected the opportunity, so exceptionally good, to rebuke the levity which had led him to throw up honorable positions—fine, stiff, steady berths in Bayswater and Belgravia, with morning prayers, as I knew, attached to one of them. Very likely his reasons had been profane and sentimental; he didn't want morning prayers, he wanted to be somebody's dear fellow; but I couldn't be the person to rebuke him. He shuffled these episodes out of sight—I saw he had no wish to discuss them. I noted further, strangely enough, that it would probably be a questionable pleasure for him to see me again: he doubted now even of my power to condone his aberrations. He didn't wish to have to explain; and his behavior was likely in future to need explanation. When I bade him farewell he looked at me a moment with eyes that said everything: "How can I talk about those exquisite years in this place, before these people, with the old women poking their heads in? It was very good of you to come to see me; it wasn't my idea—*she* brought you. We've said everything; it's over; you'll lose all patience with me, and I'd rather you shouldn't see the rest." I sent him some money in a letter the next day, but I saw the rest only in the light of a barren sequel.

A whole year after my visit to him I became aware once, in dining out, that Brooksmith was one of the several servants who hovered behind our chairs. He hadn't opened the door of the house to me, nor had I recognized him in the array of retainers in the hall. This time I tried to catch his eye, but he never gave me a chance, and when he handed me a dish I could only be careful to thank him audibly. Indeed I partook of two *entrées* of which I had my doubts, subsequently converted into certainties, in order not to snub

him. He looked well enough in health, but much older, and wore in an exceptionally marked degree the glazed and expressionless mask of the British domestic *de race*. I saw with dismay that if I hadn't known him I should have taken him, on the showing of his countenance, for an extravagant illustration of irresponsive servile gloom. I said to myself that he had become a reactionary, gone over to the Philistines, thrown himself into religion, the religion of his "place," like a foreign lady *sur le retour*. I divined, moreover, that he was only engaged for the evening—he had become a mere waiter, had joined the band of the white-waistcoated who "go out." There was something pathetic in this fact—it was a terrible vulgarization of Brooksmith. It was the mercenary prose of butlerhood; he had given up the struggle for the poetry. If reciprocity was what he had missed, where was the reciprocity now? Only in the bottoms of the wineglasses and the five shillings—or whatever they get—clapped into his hand by the permanent man. However, I supposed he had taken up a precarious branch of his profession because it after all sent him less downstairs. His relations with London society were more superficial, but they were of course more various. As I went away on this occasion I looked out for him eagerly among the four or five attendants whose perpendicular persons, fluting the walls of London passages, are supposed to lubricate the process of departure; but he was not on duty. I asked one of the others if he were not in the house, and received the prompt answer: "Just left, sir. Anything I can do for you, sir?" I wanted to say, "Please give him my kind regards"; but I abstained—I didn't want to compromise him; and I never came across him again.

Often and often, in dining out, I looked for him, sometimes accepting invitations on purpose to multiply the chances of my meeting him. But always in vain; so that as I met many other members of the casual class over and over again I, at last, adopted the theory that he always procured a list of expected guests beforehand and kept away from the banquets which he thus learned I was to grace. At last I gave up hope, and one day at the end of three years I received another visit from his aunt. She was drearier and dingier, almost squalid, and she was in great tribula-

tion and want. Her sister, Mrs. Brooksmith, had been dead a year, and three months later her nephew had disappeared. He had always looked after her a bit—since her troubles; I never knew what her troubles had been—and now she hadn't so much as a petticoat to pawn. She had also a niece, to whom she had been everything before her troubles, but the niece had treated her most shameful. These were details; the great and romantic fact was Brooksmith's final evasion of his fate. He had gone out to wait one evening as usual, in a white waistcoat she had done up for him with her own hands—being due at a large party up Kensington way. But he had never come home again and had never arrived at the large party, nor at any party that anyone could make out. No trace of him had come to light—no gleam of the white waistcoat had pierced the obscurity of his doom. This news was a sharp shock to me, for I had my ideas about his real destination. His aged relative had promptly, as she said, guessed the worst. Somehow and somewhere he had got out of the way altogether, and now I trust that, with characteristic deliberation, he is changing the plates of the immortal gods. As my depressing visitant also said, he never *had* got his spirits up. I was fortunately able to dismiss her with her own somewhat improved. But the dim ghost of poor Brooksmith is one of those that I see. He had indeed been spoiled.

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

(1889)

By RUDYARD KIPLING (1865–)

The early tales of India give us some of Kipling's best work, with strongest color of place, and most virile force. This story is told with the least possible of the descriptive or reflective element. It is distinctly a story of adventure. The characters are scarcely acceptable human beings, yet the grip of interest in their fortunes masters your repulsion for them as men. The compression, the omission of unnecessary detail, which mark Mr. Kipling's style everywhere are specially evident here. His theme is the warning to England that he gives again in "The Man Who Was"—the unnatural conditions in England's empire in India which form a constant menace to her dominion.

"Brother to a Prince and fellow to a beggar if he be found worthy."

The law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct of life, and one not easy to follow. I have been fellow to a beggar again and again under circumstances which prevented either of us finding out whether the other was worthy. I have still to be brother to a prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable king, and was promised the reversion of a kingdom—army, law courts, revenue, and policy all complete. But to-day I greatly fear that my king is dead, and if I want a crown I must go and hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir. There had been a deficit in the budget, which necessitated traveling not second class, which is only half as dear as first class, but by intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the intermediate class, and the population are either intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty; or loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not patronize refreshment rooms. They carry their food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweetmeat sellers, and drink the roadside water. That is why in the hot weather intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.

My particular intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a huge gentleman in shirt sleeves entered, and, following the custom of intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whisky. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food. "If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying—it's seven hundred million," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him. We talked politics—the politics of loaferdom that sees things from the under side where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off—and we talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, which is the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas, which he wanted for dinner, and I had no money at all, owing to the hitch in the budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help him in any way.

"We might threaten a station master, and make him send a wire on tick," said my friend, "but that'd mean inquiries

for you and for me, and I've got my hands full these days. Did you say you are traveling back along this line within any days?"

"Within ten," I said.

"Can't you make it eight?" said he. "Mine is rather urgent business."

"I can send your telegram within ten days if that will serve you," I said.

"I couldn't trust the wire to fetch him now I think of it. It's this way. He leaves Delhi on the 23d for Bombay. That means he'll be running through Ajmir about the night of the 23d."

"But I'm going into the Indian desert," I explained.

"Well *and* good," said he. "You'll be changing at Marwar Junction to get into Jodhpore territory—you must do that—and he'll be coming through Marwar Junction in the early morning of the 24th by the Bombay mail. Can you be at Marwar Junction on that time? 'Twon't be inconveniencing you, because I know that there's precious few pickings to be got out of these central India states—even though you pretend to be correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*."

"Have you ever tried that trick?" I asked.

"Again and again, but the residents find you out, and then you get escorted to the border before you've time to get your knife into them. But about my friend here. I *must* give him a word o' mouth to tell him what's come to me, or else he won't know where to go. I would take it more than kind of you if you was to come out of central India in time to catch him at Marwar Junction, and say to him, 'He has gone South for the week.' He'll know what that means. He's a big man with a red beard, and a great swell he is. You'll find him sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage round him in a second-class compartment. But don't you be afraid. Slip down the window, and say, 'He has gone South for the week,' and he'll tumble. It's only cutting your time of stay in those parts by two days. I ask you as a stranger going to the West," he said with emphasis.

"Where have *you* come from?" said I.

"From the East," said he, "and I am hoping that you

will give him the message on the square—for the sake of my mother as well as your own."

Englishmen are not usually softened by appeals to the memory of their mothers, but for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent, I saw fit to agree.

"It's more than a little matter," said he, "and that's why I ask you to do it, and now I know that I can depend on you doing it. A second-class carriage at Marwar Junction, and a red-haired man asleep in it. You'll be sure to remember. I get out at the next station, and I must hold on there till he comes or sends me what I want."

"I'll give the message if I catch him," I said, "and for the sake of your mother as well as mine I'll give you a word of advice. Don't try to run the central India states just now as the correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*. There's a real one knocking about here, and it might lead to trouble."

"Thank you," said he simply, "and when will the swine be gone? I can't starve because he's ruining my work. I wanted to get hold of the Degumber rajah down here about his father's widow, and give him a jump."

"What did he do to his father's widow, then?"

"Filled her up with red pepper and slippered her to death as she hung from a beam. I found that out myself, and I'm the only man that would dare going into the state to get hush money for it. They'll try to poison me, same as they did in Chortumna when I went on the loot there. But you'll give the man at Marwar Junction my message?"

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers and bleeding small native states with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness. The native states have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches. They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of native states so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. Native states were

created by Providence in order to supply picturesque scenery, tigers, and tall writing. They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the railway and the telegraph on one side, and on the other the days of Harun-al-Raschid. When I left the train I did business with divers kings, and in eight days passed through many changes of life. Sometimes I wore dress clothes and consorted with princes and politicals, drinking from crystal and eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out upon the ground and devoured what I could get from a plate made of a flapjack, and drank the running water, and slept under the same rug as my servant. It was all in a day's work.

Then I headed for the great Indian desert upon the proper date, as I had promised, and the night mail set me down at Marwar Junction, where a funny little, happy-go-lucky, native-managed railway runs to Jodhpore. The Bombay mail from Delhi makes a short halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in, and I had just time to hurry to her platform and go down the carriages. There was only one second-class on the train. I slipped the window and looked down upon a flaming red beard, half covered by a railway rug. That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt, and I saw his face in the light of the lamps. It was a great and shining face.

"Tickets again?" said he.

"No," said I. "I am to tell you that he is gone South for the week. He is gone South for the week!"

The train had begun to move out. The red man rubbed his eyes. "He has gone South for the week," he repeated. "Now that's just like his impudence. Did he say that I was to give you anything?—'cause I won't."

"He didn't," I said, and dropped away, and watched the red lights die out in the dark. It was horribly cold, because the wind was blowing off the sands. I climbed into my own train—not an intermediate carriage this time—and went to sleep.

If the man with the beard had given me a rupee I should have kept it as a memento of a rather curious affair. But the consciousness of having done my duty was my only reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends

could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they "stuck up" one of the little rat-trap states of central India or southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them, and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from the Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an office where there were no kings and no incidents except the daily manufacture of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies arrive, and beg that the editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; colonels who have been overpassed for commands sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority *versus* Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from their regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother missionary under special patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti, will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah-pulling machines, carriage couplings, and unbreakable swords and axletrees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball committees clamor to have the glories of their last dance more fully expounded; strange ladies rustle in and say, "I want a hundred ladies' cards printed *at once,* please," which is manifestly part of an editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof reader. And, all the time, the telephone bell is ringing madly, and kings are being killed on the Continent, and empires are saying, "You're another," and Mister Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British dominions, and the little black copy boys are whining "*kaa-pi chayha-yeh*" (copy wanted) like tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank as Modred's shield.

But that is the amusing part of the year. There are other six months wherein none ever come to call, and the thermometer walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass, and the office is darkened to just above reading light, and the press machines are red hot of touch, and nobody writes anything but accounts of amusements in the hill stations or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes a tinkling terror, because it tells you of the sudden deaths of men and women that you knew intimately, and the prickly heat covers you as with a garment, and you sit down and write: "A slight increase of sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta Khan District. The outbreak is purely sporadic in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic efforts of the district authorities, is now almost at an end. It is, however, with deep regret we record the death, etc."

Then the sickness really breaks out, and the less recording and reporting the better for the peace of the subscribers. But the empires and the kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the foreman thinks that a daily paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the hill stations in the middle of their amusements say: "Good gracious! Why can't the paper be sparkling? I'm sure there's plenty going on up here."

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as the advertisements say, "must be experienced to be appreciated."

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed, the dawn would lower the thermometer from 96° to almost 84° for almost half an hour, and in that chill—you have no idea how cold is 84° on the grass until you begin to pray for it—a very tired man could set off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A king or courtier or a courtesan or a community was going to die or get a new constitution, or do something that was important on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram. It was a pitchy

black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo*, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretense. It was a shade cooler in the press room than the office, so I sat there, while the type clicked and clicked, and the night jars hooted at the windows, and the all-but-naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, was aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make tension, but, as the clock hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood in front of me. The first one said, "It's him!" The second one said, "So it is!" And they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their foreheads. "We see there was a light burning across the road, and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to my friend here, 'The office is open. Let's come along and speak to him as turned us back from the Degumber state,'" said the smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction. There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Half an hour's talk with you cool and comfortable in the office," said the red-bearded man. "We'd *like* some drink —the Contrack doesn't begin yet, Peachey, so you needn't look—but what we really want is advice. We don't want

money. We ask you as a favor, because you did us a bad turn about Degumber."

I led from the press-room to the stifling office with the maps on the walls, and the red-haired man rubbed his hands. "That's something like," said he. "This was the proper shop to come to. Now, sir, let me introduce to you brother Peachey Carnehan, that's him, and brother Daniel Dravot, that is *me*, and the less said about our professions the better, for we have been most things in our time—soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof reader, street preacher, and correspondents of the *Backwoodsman* when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light."

I watched the test. The men were absolutely sober, so I gave them each a tepid peg.

"Well *and* good," said Carnehan of the eyebrows, wiping the froth from his mustache. "Let me talk now, Dan. We have been all over India, mostly on foot. We have been boiler fitters, engine drivers, petty contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn't big enough for such as us."

They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued: "The country isn't half worked out because they that governs it won't let you touch it. They spend all their blessed time in governing it, and you can't lift a spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor anything like that without all the government saying, 'Leave it alone and let us govern.' Therefore, such as it is, we will let it alone, and go away to some other place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men, and there is nothing that we are afraid of except drink, and we have signed a contrack on that. *Therefore*, we are going away to be kings."

"Kings in our own right," muttered Dravot.

"Yes, of course," I said. "You've been tramping in the sun, and it's a very warm night, and hadn't you better sleep over the notion? Come to-morrow."

"Neither drunk nor sunstruck," said Dravot. "We have

slept over the notion half a year, and require to see Books and Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can sar-a-*whack*. They call it Kafiristan. By my reckoning it's the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Peshawar. They have two-and-thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third. It's a mountainous country, and the women of those parts are very beautiful."

"But that is provided against in the Contrack," said Carnehan. "Neither Women nor Liqu-or, Daniel."

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight, a man who knows how to drill men can always be a king. We shall go to those parts and say to any king we find, 'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that king and seize his throne, and establish a dy-nasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. It's one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn't do anything."

"That's more like," said Carnehan. "If you could think us a little more mad we would be more pleased. We have come to you to know about this country, to read a book about it, and to be shown maps. We want you to tell us that we are fools, and to show us your books." He turned to the bookcases.

"Are you at all in earnest?" I said.

"A little," said Dravot sweetly. "As big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I uncased the big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and two smaller frontier maps, hauled down volume INF–KAN of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up

to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts's army. We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann territory. Then we get among the hills—fourteen thousand feet—fifteen thousand—it will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I handed him Wood on the *Sources of the Oxus*. Carnehan was deep in the *Encyclopædia*.

"They're a mixed lot," said Dravot reflectively, "and it won't help us to know the names of their tribes. The more tribes the more they'll fight, and the better for us. From Jagdallak to Ashang. H'mm!"

"But all the information about the country is as sketchy and inaccurate as can be," I protested. "No one knows anything about it really. Here's the file of the *United Services' Institute*. Read what Bellew says."

"Blow Bellew!" said Carnehan. "Dan, they're an all-fired lot of heathens, but this book here says they think they're related to us English."

I smoked while the men pored over *Raverty, Wood*, the maps, and the *Encyclopædia*.

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot politely. "It's about four o'clock now. We'll go before six o'clock if you want to sleep, and we won't steal any of the papers. Don't you sit up. We're two harmless lunatics, and if you come to-morrow evening down to the Serai, we'll say good-by to you."

"You *are* two fools," I answered. "You'll be turned back at the frontier, or cut up the minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do you want any money or a recommendation down country? I can help you to the chance of work next week."

"Next week we shall be hard at work ourselves, thank you," said Dravot. "It isn't so easy being a King as it looks. When we've got our Kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a Contrack like that!" said Carnehan with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half sheet of notepaper on which was written the following (I copied it, then and there, as a curiosity):

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

(*One*) *That me and you will settle this matter together:* i. e., *to be Kings of Kafiristan.*

(*Two*) *That you and me will not, while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman, black, white, or brown, so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful.*

(*Three*) *That we conduct ourselves with Dignity and Discretion, and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.*

Signed by you and me this day.

Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan,
Daniel Dravot,
Both Gentlemen at Large.

"There was no need for the last article," said Carnehan, blushing modestly, "but it looks regular. Now you know the sort of men that loafers are—we *are* loafers, Dan, until we get out of India—and *do* you think that we could sign a Contrack like that unless we was in earnest? We have kept away from the two things that make life worth having."

"You won't enjoy your lives much longer if you are going to try this idiotic adventure. Don't set the office on fire," I said, "and go away before nine o'clock."

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "Contrack." "Be sure to come down to the Serai to-morrow," were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great four-square sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the North load and unload. All the nationalities of central Asia may be found there, and most of the folk of India proper. Balkh and Bokhara there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to draw eye teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises, Persian pussy cats, saddle bags, fat-tailed sheep and musk in the Kumharsen Serai, and get many strange things for nothing. In the afternoon I went down there to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying about drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting a child's paper whirligig. Behind him was his servant, bending under the load of a crate of

mud toys. The two were loading up two camels, and the inhabitants of the Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

"The priest is mad," said a horse dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the Amir. He will either be raised to honor or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning, and has been behaving madly ever since."

"The witless are under the protection of God," stammered a flat-cheeked Usbeg in broken Hindi. "They foretell future events."

"Would they could have foretold that my caravan would have been cut up by the Shinwaris almost within shadow of the Pass!" grunted the Eusufzai agent of a Rajputana trading house whose goods had been feloniously diverted into the hands of other robbers just across the border, and whose misfortunes were the laughing stock of the bazaar. "Ohé, priest, whence come you and whither do you go?"

"From Roum have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirligig; "from Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars, the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and perjurers! Who will take the protected of God to the North to sell charms that are never still to the Amir? The camels shall not gall, the sons shall not fall sick, and the wives shall remain faithful while they are away of the men who give me place in their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper the King of the Roos with a golden slipper with a silver heel? The protection of Pir Khan be upon his labors!" He spread out the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between the lines of tethered horses.

"There starts a caravan from Peshawar to Kabul in twenty days, *Huzrut*," said the Eusufzai trader. "My camels go therewith. Do thou also go and bring us good luck."

"I will go even now!" shouted the priest. "I will depart upon my winged camels, and be at Peshawar in a day! Ho! Hazar Mir Khan," he yelled to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt, and turning round to me, cried:—

"Come thou also, Sahib, a little along the road, and I will

sell thee a charm—an amulet that shall make thee King of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road, and the priest halted.

"What d'you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawar till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels, and strike into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir, O Lor'! Put your hand under the camel bags and tell me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini, and another and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot placidly.

"Twenty of 'em, and ammunition to correspond, under the whirligigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things!" I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."

"Fifteen hundred rupees of capital—every rupee we could beg, borrow, or steal—are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest?"

"Have you got everything you want?" I asked, overcome with astonishment.

"Not yet, but we shall soon. Give us a memento of your kindness, *brother*. You did me a service yesterday, and that time in Marwar. Half my kingdom shall you have, as the saying is." I slipped a small charm compass from my watch chain and handed it up to the priest.

"Good-by," said Dravot, giving me his hand cautiously. "It's the last time we'll shake hands with an Englishman these many days. Shake hands with him, Carnehan," he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in the Serai attested that they were complete to the

native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection. But, beyond, they would find death, certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native friend of mine, giving me the news of the day from Peshawar, wound up his letter with: "There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H. the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawar and associated himself to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased because through superstition they imagine that such mad fellows bring good-fortune."

The two then were beyond the border. I would have prayed for them, but that night a real king died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

. . . . . .

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued, and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely. At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled—this rag-wrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp.

"Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of gray hair, to the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where.

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whisky. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated, "and I was the King of Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned kings we was! In this office we settled it—you setting there and giving us the books. I am Peachey—Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan, and you've been setting here ever since—O Lord!"

I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

"It's true," said Carnehan, with a dry cackle, nursing his feet, which were wrapped in rags. "True as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads—me and Dravot—poor Dan—oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whisky," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest, and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

"I ain't mad—yet, but I will be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes, and don't say anything."

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table, and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at *me*," said Carnehan.

"That comes afterwards, but for the Lord's sake don't distrack me. We left with that caravan, me and Dravot, playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with.

Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners—cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot's beard, and we all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot's big red beard—so funny." His eyes left mine and he smiled foolishly.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said at a venture, "after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan."

"No, we didn't, neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels —mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved his head into patterns. He shaved mine, too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen. That was in a most mountainous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than the goats. Always fighting they are, and don't let you sleep at night."

"Take some more whisky," I said very slowly. "What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no further because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir. No, they was two for three ha'pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woeful sore. And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot, 'For the Lord's sake, let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off,' and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the

boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing, 'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man, 'If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob'; but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountainous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountainous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary. They went up and up, and down and down, and that other party, Carnehan, was imploring of Dravot not to sing and whistle so loud for fear of bringing down the tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that if a king couldn't sing it wasn't worth being king, and whacked the mules over the rump, and never took no heed for ten cold days. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them or us to eat. We sat upon the boxes, and played odd and even with the cartridges that was jolted out.

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremenjus. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built. Says Dravot, unpacking the guns, 'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men,' and with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men, and drops one of them at two hundred yards from the rock where we was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up and down the valley. Then we goes up to the ten men that had run across the snow too, and they fires a footy little arrow at us. Dravot he shoots above their heads, and they all falls down flat. Then he

walks over them and kicks them, and then he lifts them up and shakes hands all around to make them friendly like. He calls them and gives them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand for all the world as though he was king already. They takes the boxes and him across the valley and up the hill into a pine wood on the top, where there was half a dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the biggest—a fellow they call Imbra—and lays a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his nose respectful with his own nose, patting him on the head, and saluting in front of it. He turns round to the men and nods his head, and says, 'That's all right. I'm in the know too, and these old jim-jams are my friends.' Then he opens his mouth and points down it, and when the first man brings him food, he says, 'No'; and when the second man brings him food he says, 'No'; but when one of the old priests and the boss of the village brings him food he says, 'Yes,' very haughty, and eats it slow. That was how we came to our first village, without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled from one of those damned rope bridges, you see, and you couldn't expect a man to laugh much after that."

"Take some more whisky and go on," I said. "That was the first village you came into. How did you get to be king?"

"I wasn't king," said Carnehan. "Dravot he was the king, and a handsome man he looked with the gold crown on his head and all. Him and the other party stayed in that village, and every morning Dravot sat by the side of old Imbra, and the people came and worshiped. That was Dravot's order. Then a lot of men came into the valley, and Carnehan and Dravot picks them off with the rifles before they knew where they was, and runs down into the valley and up again the other side, and finds another village, same as the first one, and the people all falls down flat on their faces, and Dravot says, 'Now what is the trouble between you two villages?' and the people points to a woman, as fair as you or me, that was carried off, and Dravot takes her back to the first village and counts up the dead—eight there was. For each dead man Dravot pours a little milk on the ground and waves his arms like a whirligig and, 'That's all right,' says he. Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of each village by the

arm and walks them down into the valley, and shows them how to scratch a line with a spear right down the valley, and gives each a sod of turf from both sides o' the line. Then all the people comes down and shouts like the devil and all, and Dravot says, 'Go and dig the land, and be fruitful and multiply,' which they did, though they didn't understand. Then we asks the names of things in their lingo—bread and water and fire and idols and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each village up to the idol, and says he must sit there and judge the people, and if anything goes wrong he is to be shot.

"Next week they was all turning up the land in the valley as quiet as bees and much prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints and told Dravot in dumb show what it was about. 'That's just the beginning,' says Dravot. 'They think we're gods.' He and Carnehan picks out twenty good men and shows them how to click off a rifle, and form fours, and advance in line, and they was very pleased to do so, and clever to see the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one village, and one at the other, and off we two goes to see what was to be done in the next valley. That was all rock, and there was a little village there, and Carnehan says, 'Send 'em to the old valley to plant,' and takes 'em there and gives 'em some land that wasn't took before. They were a poor lot, and we blooded 'em with a kid before letting 'em into the new Kingdom. That was to impress the people, and then they settled down quiet, and Carnehan went back to Dravot, who had got into another valley, all snow and ice and most mountainous. There was no people there, and the Army got afraid, so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on till he finds some people in a village, and the Army explains that unless the people wants to be killed they had better not shoot their little matchlocks—for they had matchlocks. We makes friends with the priest and I stays there alone with two of the Army, teaching the men how to drill, and a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettledrums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new god kicking about. Carnehan sights for the brown of the men half a mile across the snow, and wings one of them. Then he sends a message to the Chief that, unless he wished to be killed, he must come and shake hands with me and leave his arms behind. The Chief comes alone first,

and Carnehan shakes hands with him and whirls his arms about, same as Dravot used, and very much surprised that chief was, and strokes my eyebrows. Then Carnehan goes alone to the Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he had an enemy he hated. 'I have,' says the chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets the two of the army to show them drill, and at the end of two weeks the men can manœuvre about as well as volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chief's men rushes into a village and takes it, we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and I gives the Chief a rag from my coat and says, 'Occupy till I come,' which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot, wherever he be by land or by sea."

At the risk of throwing the creature out of train I interrupted, "How could you write a letter up yonder?"

"The letter?—Oh!—The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we'd learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab."

I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cipher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds, and tried to teach me his method, but failed.

"I sent that letter to Dravot," said Carnehan, "and told him to come back because this kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working. They called the village we took along with the chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priest at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village, and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who

had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

"One morning I heard the devil's own noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot marches down the hill with his Army and a tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the most amazing, a great gold crown on his head. 'My Gord, Carnehan,' says Daniel, 'this is a tremenjus business, and we've got the whole country as far as it's worth having. I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis, and you're my younger brother, and a god too! It's the biggest thing we've ever seen. I've been marching and fighting for six weeks with the army, and every footy little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful; and more than that, I've got the key of the whole show, as you'll see, and I've got a crown for you! I told 'em to make two of 'em at a place called Shu, where the gold lies in the rock like suet in mutton. Gold I've seen, and turquoise I've kicked out of the cliffs, and there's garnets in the sands of the river, and here's a chunk of amber that a man brought me. Call up all the priests and, here, take your crown.'

"One of the men opens a black hair bag, and I slips the crown on. It was too small and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory. Hammered gold it was—five-pound weight, like a hoop of a barrel.

"'Peachey,' says Dravot, 'we don't want to fight no more. The craft's the trick, so help me!' and he brings forward that same Chief that I left at Bashkai—Billy Fish we called him afterwards, because he was so like Billy Fish that drove the big tank engine at Mach on the Bolan in the old days. 'Shake hands with him,' says Dravot, and I shook hands and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me the grip. I said nothing, but tried him with the fellow-craft grip. He answers all right, and I tried the master's grip, but that was a slip. 'A fellow-craft he is!' I says to Dan. 'Does he know the word?' 'He does,' says Dan, 'and all the priests know. It's a miracle! The Chiefs and the priest can work a fellow-craft lodge in a way that's very like ours, and they've cut the marks on the rocks, but they don't know the third degree, and they've come to find out. It's Gord's Truth. I've known these long years that the Afghans knew up to the fellow-craft degree, but this is a miracle. A god and a grand master

of the craft am I, and a lodge in the third degree I will open, and we'll raise the head priests and the Chiefs of the villages.'

"'It's against all the law,' I says, 'holding a lodge without warrant from anyone; and we never held office in any lodge.'

"'It's a master-stroke of policy,' says Dravot. 'It means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogy on a down grade. We can't stop to inquire now, or they'll turn against us. I've forty Chiefs at my heel, and passed and raised according to their merit they shall be. Billet these men on the villages and see that we run up a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra will do for the Lodge-room. The women must make aprons as you show them. I'll hold a levee of Chiefs to-night and Lodge to-morrow.'

"I was fair run off my legs, but I wasn't such a fool as not to see what a pull this craft business gave us. I showed the priests' families how to make aprons of the degrees, but for Dravot's apron the blue border and marks was made of turquoise lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a great square stone in the temple for the Master's chair, and little stones for the officers' chairs, and painted the black pavement with white squares, and did what we could to make things regular.

"At the levee which was held that night on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot gives out that him and me were gods and sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to shake hands, and they was so hairy and white and fair it was just shaking hands with old friends. We gave them names according as they was like men we had known in India—Billy Fish, Holly Dilworth, Pikky Kergan that was Bazar-Master when I was at Mhow, and so on, and so on.

"*The* most amazing miracle was a Lodge next night. One of the old priests was watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy, for I knew we'd have to fudge the Ritual, and I didn't know what the men knew. The old priest was a stranger come in from beyond the village of Bashkai. The minute Dravot puts on the Master's apron that the girls had

made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was sitting on. 'It's all up now,' I says. 'That comes of meddling with the Craft without warrant!' Dravot never winked an eye, not when ten priests took and tilted over the Grand-Master's chair—which was to say the stone of Imbra. The priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows all the other priests the Master's Mark, same as was on Dravot's apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of the temple of Imbra knew it was there. The old chap falls flat on his face at Dravot's feet and kisses 'em. 'Luck again,' says Dravot, across the Lodge to me, 'they say it's the missing Mark that no one could understand the why of. We're more than safe now.' Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a gavel and says: 'By virtue of the authority vested in me by my own right hand and the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand Master of all Freemasonry in Kafiristan in this the Mother Lodge o' the country, and King of Kafiristan equally with Peachey!' At that he puts on his crown and I puts on mine—I was doing Senior Warden—and we opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey and Dravot raised such as was worthy—high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to Ritual, but it served our turn. We didn't raise more than ten of the biggest men because we didn't want to make the Degree common. And they was clamoring to be raised.

"'In another six months,' says Dravot, 'we'll hold another Communication and see how you are working.' Then he asks them about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other and were fair sick and tired of it. And when they wasn't doing that they was fighting with the Mohammedans. 'You can fight those when they come into our country,' says Dravot. 'Tell off every tenth man of your tribes for a frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to this valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and

I know that you won't cheat me because you're white people—sons of Alexander—and not like common, black Mohammedans. You are *my* people and by God,' says he, running off into English at the end—'I'll make a damned fine nation of you, or I'll die in the making!'

"I can't tell all we did for the next six months because Dravot did a lot I couldn't see the hang of, and he learned their lingo in a way I never could. My work was to help the people plow, and now and again to go out with some of the army and see what the other villages were doing, and make 'em throw rope bridges across the ravines which cut up the country horrid. Dravot was very kind to me, but when he walked up and down in the pine wood pulling that bloody red beard of his with both fists I knew he was thinking plans I could not advise him about, and I just waited for orders.

"But Dravot never showed me disrespect before the people. They were afraid of me and the Army, but they loved Dan. He was the best of friends with the priests and the Chiefs, but anyone could come across the hills with a complaint and Dravot would hear him out fair, and call four priests together and say what was to be done. He used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief we called Kafuzelum—it was like enough to his real name—and hold councils with 'em when there was any fighting to be done in small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council. Between the lot of 'em they sent me, with forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini rifles, that come out of the Amir's workshops at Kabul, from one of the Amir's Herati regiments that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

"I stayed in Ghorband a month, and gave the Governor the pick of my baskets for hush money, and bribed the colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes people, we got more than a hundred hand-made Martinis, a hundred good Kohat Jezails that'll throw to six hundred yards, and forty manloads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with what I had, and

distributed 'em among the men that the Chiefs sent in to me to drill. Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew how to hold arms pretty straight. Even those cork-screwed, hand-made guns was a miracle to them. Dravot talked big about powder shops and factories, walking up and down in the pine wood when the winter was coming on.

"'I won't make a nation,' says he. 'I'll make an empire! These men aren't niggers; they're English. Look at their eyes—look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the lost tribes, or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people—two hundred and fifty thousand fighting men—and all English! They only want the rifles and a little drilling. Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India! Peachey, man,' he says, chewing his beard in great hunks, 'we shall be Emperors—Emperors of the Earth! Rajah Brooke will be a suckling to us. I'll treat with the Viceroy on equal terms. I'll ask him to send me twelve picked English—twelve that I know of—to help us govern a bit. There's Mackray, Sergeant-pensioner at Segowli—many's the good dinner he's given me, and his wife a pair of trousers. There's Donkin, the warden of Tounghoo jail; there's hundreds that I could lay my hand on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do it for me. I'll send a man through in the spring for those men, and I'll write for a dispensation from the Grand Lodge for what I've done as Grand-Master. That—and all the Sniders that'll be thrown out when the native troops in India take up the Martini. They'll be worn smooth, but they'll do for fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a hundred thousand Sniders run through the Amir's country in driblets—I'd be content with twenty thousand in one year—and we'd be an Empire. When everything was shipshape, I'd hand over the crown—this crown I'm wearing now—to Queen Victoria on my knees, and she'd say: "Rise

up, Sir Daniel Dravot." Oh, it's big! It's big, I tell you! But there's so much to be done in every place—Bashkai, Khawak, Shu, and everywhere else.'

"'What is it?' I says. 'There are no more men coming in to be drilled this autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds. They're bringing the snow.'

"'It isn't that,' says Daniel, putting his hand very hard on my shoulder; 'and I don't wish to say anything that's against you, for no other living man would have followed me and made me what I am as you have done. You're a first-class Commander-in-Chief, and the people know you; but—it's a big country, and somehow you can't help me, Peachey, in the way I want to be helped.'

"'Go to your blasted priests, then!' I said, and I was sorry when I made that remark, but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking so superior when I'd drilled all the men, and done all he told me.

"'Don't let's quarrel, Peachey,' says Daniel without cursing. 'You're a King, too, and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but can't you see, Peachey, we want cleverer men than us now—three or four of 'em that we can scatter about for our Deputies? It's a hugeous great State, and I can't always tell the right thing to do, and I haven't time for all I want to do, and here's the winter coming on and all.' He put half his beard into his mouth, and it was as red as the gold of his crown.

"'I'm sorry, Daniel,' says I. 'I've done all I could. I've drilled the men and shown the people how to stack their oats better, and I've brought in those tinware rifles from Ghorband—but I know what you're driving at. I take it kings always feel oppressed that way.'

"'There's another thing, too,' says Dravot, walking up and down. 'The winter's coming and these people won't be giving much trouble, and if they do we can't move about. I want a wife.'

"'For Gord's sake leave the women alone!' I says. 'We've both got all the work we can, though I *am* a fool. Remember the Contrack, and keep clear o' women.'

"'The Contrack only lasted till such time as we was Kings; and Kings we have been these months past,' says Dravot, weighing his crown in his hand. 'You go get a

wife, too, Peachey—a nice, strappin', plump girl that'll keep you warm in the winter. They're prettier than English girls, and we can take the pick of 'em. Boil 'em once or twice in hot water, and they'll come as fair as chicken and ham.'

"'Don't tempt me!' I says. 'I will not have any dealings with a woman not till we are a dam' side more settled than we are now. I've been doing the work o' two men, and you've been doing the work o' three. Let's lie off a bit, and see if we can get some better tobacco from Afghan country and run in some good liquor; but no women.'

"'Who's talking o' *women?*' says Dravot. 'I said *wife*—a Queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your side and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs. That's what I want.'

"'Do you remember that Bengali woman I kept at Mogul Serai when I was plate layer?' says I. 'A fat lot o' good she was to me. She taught me the lingo and one or two other things; but what happened? She ran away with the Station Master's servant and half my month's pay. Then she turned up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste, and had the impidence to say I was her husband—all among the drivers of the running shed!'

"'We've done with that,' says Dravot. 'These women are whiter than you or me, and a Queen I will have for the winter months.'

"'For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not,*' I says. 'It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women, 'specially when they've got a new raw Kingdom to work over.'

"'For the last time of answering, I will,' said Dravot, and he went away through the pine trees looking like a big red devil. The low sun hit his crown and beard on one side, and the two blazed like hot coals.

"But getting a wife was not as easy as Dan thought. He put it before the Council, and there was no answer till Billy Fish said that he'd better ask the girls. Dravot damned them all round. 'What's wrong with me?' he shouts, standing by the idol Imbra. 'Am I a dog or am I not enough of a man for your wenches? Haven't I put the shadow of

my hand over this country? Who stopped the last Afghan raid?' It was me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember. 'Who bought your guns? Who repaired the bridges? Who's the Grand-Master of the sign cut in the stone?' and he thumped his hand on the block that he used to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said nothing and no more did the others. 'Keep your hair on, Dan,' said I; 'and ask the girls. That's how it's done at home, and these people are quite English.'

"'The marriage of a King is a matter of State,' says Dan, in a white-hot rage, for he could feel, I hope, that he was going against his better mind. He walked out of the Council-room, and the others sat still, looking at the ground.

"'Billy Fish,' says I to the Chief of Bashkai, 'what's the difficulty here? A straight answer to a true friend.' 'You know,' says Billy Fish. 'How should a man tell you who know everything? How can daughters of men marry gods or devils? It's not proper.'

"I remembered something like that in the Bible; but if, after seeing us as long as they had, they still believed we were gods, it wasn't for me to undeceive them.

"'A god can do anything,' says I. 'If the King is fond of a girl he'll not let her die.' 'She'll have to,' said Billy Fish. 'There are all sorts of gods and devils in these mountains, and now and again a girl marries one of them and isn't seen any more. Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the stone. Only the gods know that. We thought you were men till you showed the sign of the Master.'

"I wished then that we had explained about the loss of the genuine secrets of a Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said nothing. All that night there was a blowing of horns in a little dark temple halfway down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit to die. One of the priests told us that she was being prepared to marry a King.

"'I'll have no nonsense of that kind,' says Dan. 'I don't want to interfere with your customs, but I'll take my own wife.' 'The girl's a little bit afraid,' says the priest. 'She thinks she's going to die, and they are a-heartening of her up down in the temple.'

"'Hearten her very tender, then,' says Dravot, 'or I'll hearten you with the butt of a gun so that you'll never

want to be heartened again.' He licked his lips, did Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I wasn't any means comfortable, for I knew that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together, too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

"'What is up, Fish?' I says to the Bashkai man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

"'I can't rightly say,' says he; 'but if you can induce the King to drop all this nonsense about marriage, you'll be doing him and me and yourself a great service.'

"'That I do believe,' says I. 'But sure, you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are nothing more than two of the finest men that God Almighty ever made. Nothing more, I do assure you.'

"'That may be,' says Billy Fish, 'and yet I should be sorry if it was.' He sinks his head upon his great fur cloak for a minute and thinks. 'King,' says he, 'be you man or god or devil, I'll stick by you to-day. I have twenty of my men with me, and they will follow me. We'll go to Bashkai until the storm blows over.'

"A little snow had fallen in the night, and everything was white except the greasy fat clouds that blew down and down from the north. Dravot came out with his crown on his head, swinging his arms and stamping his feet, and looking more pleased than Punch.

"'For the last time, drop it, Dan,' says I in a whisper. 'Billy Fish here says that there will be a row.'

"'A row among my people!' says Dravot. 'Not much. Peachey, you're a fool not to get a wife, too. Where's the girl?' says he with a voice as loud as the braying of a jackass. 'Call up all the Chiefs and priests, and let the Emperor see if his wife suits him.'

"There was no need to call anyone. They were all there leaning on their guns and spears round the clearing in the center of the pine wood. A deputation of priests went down

to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew up fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men with matchlocks. Not a man of them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

"'She'll do,' said Dan, looking her over. 'What's to be afraid of, lass? Come and kiss me.' He puts his arm round her. She shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and down goes her face in the side of Dan's flaming red beard.

"'The slut's bitten me!' says he, clapping his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his matchlock men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howls in their lingo—'Neither god nor devil but a man!' I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the army behind began firing into the Bashkai men.

"'God A-mighty!' says Dan. 'What is the meaning o' this?'

"'Come back! Come away!' says Billy Fish. 'Ruin and mutiny is the matter. We'll break for Bashkai if we can.'

"I tried to give some sort of orders to my men—the men o' the regular Army—but it was no use, so I fired into the brown of 'em with an English Martini and drilled three beggars in a line. The valley was full of shouting, howling creatures, and every soul was shrieking, 'Not a god nor a devil but only a man!' The Bashkai troops stuck to Billy Fish all they were worth, but their matchlocks wasn't half as good as the Kabul breech-loaders, and four of them dropped. Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was very wrathy; and Billy Fish had a hard job to prevent him running out at the crowd.

"'We can't stand,' says Billy Fish. 'Make a run for it down the valley! The whole place is against us.' The matchlock-men ran, and we went down the valley in spite of Dravot's protestations. He was swearing horribly and crying out that he was a King. The priests rolled great

stones on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and there wasn't more than six men, not counting Dan, Billy Fish, and me, that came down to the bottom of the valley alive.

"Then they stopped firing and the horns in the temple blew again. 'Come away—for God's sake come away!' says Billy Fish. 'They'll send runners out to all the villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I can protect you there, but I can't do anything now.'

"My own notion is that Dan began to go mad in his head from that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was all for walking back alone and killing the priests with his bare hands; which he could have done. 'An Emperor am I,' says Daniel, 'and next year I shall be a Knight of the Queen.'

"'All right, Dan,' says I; 'but come along now while there's time.'

"'It's your fault,' says he, 'for not looking after your Army better. There was mutiny in the midst, and you didn't know—you damned engine-driving, plate-laying, missionary's-pass-hunting hound!' He sat upon a rock and called me every foul name he could lay tongue to. I was too heartsick to care, though it was all his foolishness that brought the smash.

"'I'm sorry, Dan,' says I, 'but there's no accounting for natives. This business is our fifty-seventh. Maybe we'll make something out of it yet, when we've got to Bashkai.'

"'Let's get to Bashkai, then,' says Dan, 'and, by God, when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!'

"We walked all that day, and all that night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

"'There's no hope o' getting clear,' said Billy Fish. 'The priests will have sent runners to the villages to say that you are only men. Why didn't you stick on as gods till things was more settled? I'm a dead man,' says Billy Fish, and he throws himself down on the snow and begins to pray to his gods.

"Next morning we was in a cruel bad country—all up and down, no level ground at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-wise as if

they wanted to ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an army in position waiting in the middle!

"'The runners have been very quick,' says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh. 'They are waiting for us.'

"Three or four men began to fire from the enemy's side, and a chance shot took Daniel in the calf of the leg. That brought him to his senses. He looks across the snow at the Army, and sees the rifles that we had brought into the country.

"'We're done for,' says he. 'They are Englishmen, these people—and it's my blasted nonsense that has brought you to this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your men away; you've done what you could, and now cut for it. Carnehan,' says he, 'shake hands with me and go along with Billy. Maybe they won't kill you. I'll go and meet 'em alone. It's me that did it. Me, the King!'

"'Go!' says I. 'Go to Hell, Dan. I'm with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out, and we two will meet those folk.'

"'I'm a Chief,' says Billy Fish, quite quiet. 'I stay with you. My men can go.'

"The Bashkai fellows didn't wait for a second word but ran off, and Dan and me and Billy Fish walked across to where the drums were drumming and the horns were horning. It was cold—awful cold. I've got that cold in the back of my head now. There's a lump of it there."

The punkah coolies had gone to sleep. Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously mangled hands, and said: "What happened after that?"

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

"What was you pleased to say?" whined Carnehan. "They took them without any sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first man that set hand on him—not though old Peachey fired his last cartridge into the brown of 'em. Not a single

solitary sound did those swines make. They just closed up tight, and I tell you their furs stunk. There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks up the bloody snow and says: 'We've had a dashed fine run for our money. What's coming next?' But Peachey, Peachey Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No, he didn't neither. The King lost his head, so he did, all along o' one of those cunning rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They marched him a mile across that snow to a rope bridge over a ravine with a river at the bottom. You may have seen such. They prodded him behind like an ox. 'Damn your eyes!' says the King. 'D'you suppose I can't die like a gentleman?' He turns to Peachey—Peachey that was crying like a child. 'I've brought you to this, Peachey,' says he. 'Brought you out of your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan, where you was late Commander-in-Chief of the Emperor's forces. Say you forgive me, Peachey?' 'I do,' says Peachey. 'Fully and freely do I forgive you, Dan.' 'Shake hands, Peachey,' says he. 'I'm going now.' Out he goes, looking neither right nor left, and when he was plumb in the middle of those dizzy dancing ropes, 'Cut, you beggars,' he shouts; and they cut, and old Dan fell, turning round and round and round, twenty thousand miles, for he took half an hour to fall till he struck the water, and I could see his body caught on a rock with the gold crown close beside.

"But do you know what they did to Peachey between two pine trees? They crucified him, sir, as Peachey's hands will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and his feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and screamed, and they took him down next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. They took him down—poor old Peachey that hadn't done them any harm—that hadn't done them any . . ."

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child for some ten minutes.

"They was cruel enough to feed him up in the temple, because they said he was more of a god than old Daniel

that was a man. Then they turned him out on the snow, and told him to go home, and Peachey came home in about a year, begging along the roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked before and said: 'Come along, Peachey. It's a big thing we're doing.' The mountains they danced at night, and the mountains they tried to fall on Peachey's head, but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey came along bent double. He never let go of Dan's hand, and he never let go of Dan's head. They gave it to him as a present in the temple, to remind him not to come again, and though the crown was pure gold, and Peachey was starving, never would Peachey sell the same. You knew Dravot, sir! You knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot! Look at him now!"

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag embroidered with silver thread; and shook therefrom on to my table—the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning sun that had long been paling the lamps struck the red beard and blind sunken eyes; struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded with raw turquoises, that Carnehan placed tenderly on the battered temples.

"You behold now," said Carnehan, "the Emperor in his habit as he lived—the King of Kafiristan with his crown upon his head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch once!"

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements manifold, I recognized the head of the man of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go. I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to walk abroad. "Let me take away the whisky, and give me a little money," he gasped. "I was a King once. I'll go to the Deputy Commissioner and ask to set in the Poorhouse till I get my health. No, thank you, I can't wait till you get a carriage for me. I've urgent private affairs —in the south—at Marwar."

He shambled out of the office and departed in the direction of the Deputy Commissioner's house. That day at noon I had occasion to go down the blinding hot Mall, and I saw a crooked man crawling along the white dust of the roadside, his hat in his hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion of street singers at Home. There was not a soul in sight, and he was out of all possible earshot of the

houses. And he sang through his nose, turning his head from right to left:

"The Son of Man goes forth to war,
A golden crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in his train?"

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor wretch into my carriage and drove him off to the nearest missionary for eventual transfer to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice while he was with me whom he did not in the least recognize, and I left him singing to the missionary.

Two days later I inquired after his welfare of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

"He was admitted suffering from sunstroke. He died early yesterday morning," said the Superintendent. "Is it true that he was half an hour bareheaded in the sun at midday?"

"Yes," said I, "but do you happen to know if he had anything upon him by any chance when he died?"

"Not to my knowledge," said the superintendent.

And there the matter rests.

THE DOLL'S HOUSE[1]

(1879)

By HENRIK IBSEN (1828–1906)

This is perhaps the best known of Ibsen's plays through the storm of discussion that arose in Europe when it was first produced. Nora's assertion of independence and of individual right against the old-time religion of the demands of "wife and mother" could not fail to shock conventional society.

Quite apart from the startling moral position, the play is interesting to the student of literary forms for its break with the stage traditions that Ibsen had inherited from his predecessors in the French drama. This play, Mr. Archer points out, marks his allegiance to those traditions through the first two acts; his break with them comes in the third—a break which was to be permanent and to start him on his more original lines.

In the first two acts the entanglement of plot is familiar. The mistaken action of the heroine throws her into the power of the stage villain; the traditional husband pursues his blind egotistical course; the accepted friend of the husband falls in love with his friend's wife; the confidante receives the history of the heroine's difficulties. Except for Nora, the characters are themselves conventional and a trifle wooden. Moreover, traditional stage effects of contrast are employed. The gayety of the Christmas season, the masked ball and tarantella dance

[1] Translated from the Norwegian by Henrietta Frances Lord. Reprinted from the edition of D. Appleton and Company.

form a background to Nora's mental agony and to Dr. Rank's doom so near at hand. These are what Mr. Archer calls "the little tricks of ironic coincidence" which belong to the old school. In the third act, when Nora and Helmer sit down to consider what a failure their marriage has been, we have the really dramatic artist, Ibsen, producing a new kind of drama which has its climax, not in action, but in the thoughts which are the motive force of action.

ACT I

A room comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished.

(*To the right a door leads to the hall; to the left another door in the background to Helmer's study. Between the two doors a pianoforte.*

In the middle of the left wall a door, and somewhat nearer the front a window. Near the window a round table with an armchair and a small sofa. In the right wall, somewhat to the back, a door. In the same wall, more forward, a stove of porcelain, by it a couple of armchairs and a rocking-chair. Between the stove and the side door a small table. Engravings on the walls. An étagère *with china and small curiosities. A small bookcase of showily bound books. Carpet. A fire burns in the stove. It is winter.*

SCENE I

NORA. *A* PORTER. ELLEN. *Then* HELMER. *The bell rings in the hall outside. Presently the hall door is heard opened.* NORA *walks into the room humming contentedly. She is in walking dress, and has several parcels in her arms, which she lays on the right-hand table. She leaves the door into the hall open behind her, and a* PORTER *is seen standing outside, carrying a Christmas tree and a basket; he gives these to the* maid-servant *who opened the door.*

NORA. Be sure you hide the Christmas tree most carefully, Ellen; so that the children don't on any account catch sight of it before this evening, when it is dressed and lit. (*To the* PORTER, *taking out her purse.*) How much?

PORTER. Sixpence, if you please, ma'am.

NORA. There is a shilling. . . . No, keep the change. (*The* PORTER *thanks her and goes.* NORA *shuts the door. She continues smiling with quiet contentment as she takes off her walking things. Then she takes from her pocket a box of sweetmeats, and eats some. As she does so, she steps cautiously to her husband's door and listens.*) Yes; he is home. (*She begins humming again, walking to the right-hand table.*)

HELMER (*in his room*). Is that my lark who is twittering outside there?

NORA (*busy opening some of her parcels*). Yes, it is.

HELMER. Is it the little squirrel running about?

NORA. Yes.

HELMER. When did it get home?

NORA. Just this minute. (*Hides the box of sweetmeats in her pocket and wipes her mouth.*) Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

HELMER. I can't be interrupted now. (*A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.*) "Bought," did you say? What! all that heap of things? Has my little spendthrift bird been wasting more money?

NORA. But, Torvald, we really can waste a little now. It is positively the first Christmas we aren't obliged to pinch.

HELMER. Yes; but I'll tell you what: We mustn't waste money either.

NORA. Still, Torvald, we may venture to spend a little already, mayn't we? just a very, very little. You have really got a capital position, and you'll be earning ever so much money.

HELMER. Yes, from New Year's Day. But there is a whole quarter before my next salary is due.

NORA. Never mind; we can borrow for that little time.

HELMER. Nora! (*He steps toward her and takes her playfully by the ear.*) Is your heedlessness running away with you again? Supposing that I borrowed fifty pounds to-day, and you spent it during Christmas week, and that

on New Year's Day a tile blew off the roof and struck my head, and I were——

NORA (*stopping his mouth*). Stuff! How can you say such horrid things!

HELMER. But, supposing anything of the kind were to happen. What then?

NORA. If such a misfortune were to happen, I should not care whether I had debts or whether I hadn't.

HELMER. But what about the people I had borrowed from?

NORA. Those people! Who would trouble about them? They would be strangers, of course.

HELMER. Nora, Nora! you are a mere baby. But seriously, dear child, you know my way of thinking about such matters. No debts! Never borrow! Home life ceases to be free and beautiful directly its foundations are Borrowing and Debts. We two have held out bravely till now, and we will do so for the little time now remaining.

NORA (*going to the fireplace*). Ye—s. Just as you like, Torvald.

HELMER (*following her*). Come, come; my lark must not let her wings droop immediately. . . . What! wry faces? (*takes out his purse*). Nora, what do you think I've got here?

NORA (*turning round quickly*). Money!

HELMER. There (*gives her some notes*). By Jove! don't I know that all sorts of things are wanted at Christmas?

NORA (*counting*). Ten, twenty, thirty, forty. Oh! thank you, thank you, Torvald. This will help me on for a long while to come.

HELMER. That is just what I hope.

NORA. Yes, indeed; for a long while. But now you must come, too, and see all I have been buying. And so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a little sword as well. Here are a little horse and a trumpet for Bob. And here are a doll and a cradle for Emmy. They are only common; but she will soon pull them all to pieces. And here I've got dresses and neckties for Ellen and Mary Ann. Only I ought to have got something better for Mary Ann.

HELMER. And what is that in the other parcel?

NORA (*crying out*). No, Torvald, you're not to see that before this evening.

HELMER. Oh! ah. But now tell me, you little spendthrift, what you have got for yourself.

NORA. Never mind me. I don't want anything for myself.

HELMER. But I am sure you do. Just tell me something sensible you would like to have.

NORA. No; I really know of nothing. . . . Yes; listen, Torvald.

HELMER. Well?

NORA (*playing with his coat buttons, without looking him in the face*). If you want to give me something, you might, you know, you might——

HELMER. Well, well? Out with it!

NORA (*quickly*). You might give me the money, Torvald. Only just as much as you think you can spare; then I will buy myself something with it later on.

HELMER. But, Nora——

NORA. Oh, please do, dear Torvald, I beg and implore you. Then I would hang the money in lovely gilt paper on the Christmas tree. Wouldn't that be funny?

HELMER. What do people call the bird who always spends everything?

NORA. Yes, I know: a spendthrift, of course. But please do what I ask you, Torvald. Then I shall have time to think what I most want. Is not that very sensible? Come!

HELMER (*smiling*). Certainly; that is to say, it would be if you really kept the money I gave you, and really bought yourself something with it. But it all goes in housekeeping, and for all sorts of useless things, and then I have to find more.

NORA. But, Torvald——

HELMER. Can you deny it, Nora, dear? (*He puts his arm round her.*) My lark is the dearest little thing in the world; but she needs a very great deal of money. No one would believe how expensive it comes to keep such a little bird.

NORA. Rubbish! how can you talk so? I am sure I am as careful as I can be.

HELMER (*smiling*). Very true—as careful as you can be. But you can't be careful at all.

NORA (*hums and smiles in quiet satisfaction*). Hm—m. You should just know, Torvald, what expenses larks and squirrels have.

HELMER. What an odd little woman you are! Just like your father—always eager to get hold of money. But the moment you have it, it seems to slip through your fingers somehow; you never know how you got rid of it. Well, one must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, my dear Nora, you may say what you please, but things of that sort are inheritable.

NORA. Ah! there are many things I wish I had inherited from father.

HELMER. And I couldn't wish you to be anything but exactly what you are—my own, true, little lark. But . . . I say . . . it strikes me . . . you look so, so—what shall I call it?—to-day . . . so suspicious.

NORA. Do I?

HELMER. Yes, really. Look me full in the face.

NORA (*looking at him*). Well?

HELMER (*threatening with his finger*). Hasn't that little mouth, that is so fond of sugarplums, been eating some in the town?

NORA. Gracious! no. How can you think anything of the kind about me?

HELMER. Didn't the little mouth just look in at the confectioner's?

NORA. No, I assure you, Torvald——

HELMER. Not to taste one dainty dish?

NORA. No; most certainly not.

HELMER. Not so much as to try a few sweetmeats?

NORA. No, Torvald, I really do assure you——

HELMER. Well, well, well; of course I'm only joking.

NORA (*goes to the right-hand table*). I should not think of doing what you disapprove of.

HELMER. I know, dear; and you have given me your word (*steps to her*). No; keep your little Christmas secrets all to yourself, Nora, dear. They will come to light this very evening, when the Christmas tree is lit.

NORA. Have you also thought to invite Dr. Rank?

HELMER. No. But that is not necessary; it is an understood thing that he dines with us. Besides, I shall tell him when he looks in to-day. I have ordered some capital wine. Nora, you cannot think how I look forward to this evening!

NORA. So do I. And how the children will shout for joy, Torvald!

HELMER. Oh! it really is glorious to know that one has made one's position, and has ample means. Isn't the consciousness of it a great enjoyment?

NORA. I should think it is, indeed.

HELMER. Do you recollect last Christmas? Three whole weeks beforehand you used to shut yourself up till long past midnight in order to make flowers to trim the Christmas tree, and get ready all the other magnificent things to surprise us with. It was the most wearisome time I ever lived through.

NORA. It did not weary me at all.

HELMER (*smiling*). We did not see much for your pains.

NORA. Oh! will you never leave off teasing me about *that?* How could I help it if the cat did get in and tear everything I had made to pieces?

HELMER. To be sure, you couldn't help it, my poor little Nora. You set to work to prepare us a treat with the best will in the world, and that is the chief matter. . . . But, nevertheless, it is a good thing that hard times are over.

NORA. It is, Torvald.

HELMER. Now I needn't sit here all by myself, getting more bored every minute; and you needn't tire your eyes and your delicate little fingers——

NORA (*clapping her hands*). It is really true, isn't it, Torvald, that I needn't do it any more? Oh! how splendid! (*takes his arm*). And now I will tell you, darling, how it has been striking me we ought to arrange matters. . . . Directly Christmas is over (*the hall doorbell rings*). . . . Oh, there's a ring! (*she advances part way across the room*). That is somebody come to call. How vexing!

HELMER. I am "not at home" to callers. Don't forget that.

SCENE II

THE PRECEDING. ELLEN

ELLEN (*in the doorway to* NORA). A strange lady wishes to see you, ma'am.

NORA. Show her in.

ELLEN (*to* HELMER). And the doctor is just come, sir.

HELMER. Has he gone into my study?

ELLEN. Yes, sir (HELMER *goes into his study.* ELLEN *brings in* MRS. LINDEN, *in traveling costume, and shuts the door behind her*)

SCENE III

NORA. MRS. LINDEN

MRS. LINDEN (*timidly and slowly*). How do you do, Nora?

NORA (*uncertain who she is*). How do you do?

MRS. LINDEN. I dare say you do not know me again.

NORA. No, I really . . . oh, yes—I think (*breaking forth*). What! Christina! Is it really you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; it is I, indeed.

NORA. Christina! and to think I did not recognize you! How could I not. . . . (*More softly.*) How altered you are, Christina!

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; in nine . . . ten long years.

NORA. Is it really so long since we met? Yes, it positively is. Oh! the last eight years have been a happy time, I can tell you. And now you have come to town? all this long journey in midwinter! That was brave of you.

MRS. LINDEN. I have this moment arrived by the train.

NORA. In order to have some fun at Christmas time, to be sure. Oh, how delightful that is! Yes, fun we certainly will have. But take your things off. Aren't you frozen? (*helps her to take her things off*). There! now we will sit down here cozily by the fire. No; in that armchair; I will sit here in the rocking-chair. Yes, now you are showing me your dear old face again. It was only the first moment I saw you. . . . But you are a little paler, Christina, and perhaps a shade thinner, too.

MRS. LINDEN. And much, much older, Nora.

NORA. Yes, perhaps a little older, too—a little wee bit, not much. (*She suddenly stops; seriously.*) Oh! what a thoughtless creature I am! Here I sit chattering on, and—Dear, good Christina, can you forgive me?

MRS. LINDEN. What do you mean, Nora?

NORA (*softly*). Poor Christina! is it true you are a widow?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; three years ago.

NORA. Ah! I was sure of it. I read it in the newspaper, you know. Oh, do believe, Christina dear, I often meant to write to you then; but I kept putting it off, and something always hindered me.

MRS. LINDEN. I can very well understand that, Nora, dear.

NORA. No, Christina; it was dreadful of me. Oh, you poor darling! how much you must have gone through. . . . And he really left you nothing in the world to live upon?

MRS. LINDEN. No.

NORA. And no children either?

MRS. LINDEN. No.

NORA. Then really nothing whatever?

MRS. LINDEN. Not even a sorrow or a regret.

NORA (*looking at her incredulously*). But, my dear Christina, how is that possible?

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling sadly and stroking her hair*). Oh, it happens so sometimes, Nora.

NORA. So utterly lonely. . . . How awfully hard that must be for you! I have three of the dearest children that ever were. But I can't show them to you just now; they are out walking with nurse. However, now you must tell me your whole story.

MRS. LINDEN. No, no, I would rather hear yours.

NORA. No; you must begin; I won't be egotistical to-day. To-day I will think of you only. But one thing I really must tell you. Or do you know already what great happiness has fallen to our lot in the last few days?

MRS. LINDEN. No. What is it?

NORA. Only think! My husband has been made manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDEN. Your husband! Oh, that is really a great piece of luck.

NORA. Yes; tremendous, isn't it? A professional man's position is so uncertain, especially when he will not be concerned in any business except what is fit for a gentleman and respectable. And naturally Torvald would not do any other business; and in that matter I quite agreed with him. Oh! you may well believe how heartily glad we are. He will enter his new position on New Year's Day, and then he will have a large salary, and high percentages on the business done. In future we shall be able to live in a very different style from the way we have lived hitherto—just as we please, in fact. Oh, Christina, I feel so light and happy. . . . It really is beautiful, isn't it, to have a great deal of money, and be able to live without anxiety. Now isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; it cannot but be delightful to have bare necessaries.

NORA. No, not only bare necessaries, but a great deal of money—heaps!

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling*). Nora, Nora, haven't you grown sensible yet? In our schooldays you were a great spendthrift.

NORA (*quietly smiling*). Yes; Torvald says I am so still (*threatens with her finger*). But "Nora, Nora," is not so silly as you all think. Oh! our circumstances have really not been such that I could be a spendthrift. We both had to work.

MRS. LINDEN. You as well?

NORA. Yes, really—light fancy work: knitting, crochet, and things of that sort (*vaguely*), and also other work. I suppose you know that when we married, Torvald quitted the government service? He had no prospect of being promoted, and yet he certainly had to earn more money than before. But I do assure you that the first year he overworked himself quite terribly. You can easily understand that he was naturally obliged to get all the extra work he could and toil from morning till night. It was too much for him, and he fell dangerously ill. Then the doctors declared it was necessary for him to go to the South.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; you spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

NORA. We did. It was not an easy matter to arrange,

I can assure you. Ivar was only just born then. But we had to go. Oh, it was a delicious journey! And it saved Torvald's life. But it cost an awful sum of money, Christina.

MRS. LINDEN. You needn't tell me that, dear.

NORA. Three hundred pounds. That's a great deal, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. But in such cases it is, after all, a most fortunate thing to have the money to spend.

NORA. Yes; I ought to tell you I got it from father.

MRS. LINDEN. Ah; I see. It was just about the time he died, I think?

NORA. Yes, Christina, just then. And think what it was for me not to be able to go to him and nurse him! I was expecting little Ivar's birth daily. And then I had my Torvald to nurse, who was dangerously ill too. Dear, good father! I never saw him again, Christina. Oh! that is the hardest thing I have had to bear since I married.

MRS. LINDEN. I know you were devotedly fond of your father. And then you and your husband started for Italy?

NORA. Yes; a month later. By that time we had the money; and the doctors were so peremptory.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband returned completely cured?

NORA. Sound as a bell.

MRS. LINDEN. But—the doctor?

NORA. What about him?

MRS. LINDEN. I thought your servant said that the gentleman who came in just when I did was the doctor——

NORA. It was Dr. Rank. But he does not pay any professional visits here. He is our best friend, and comes in to chat with us at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour's illness since we went to Italy. And the children, too, are so healthy and well, and so am I. (*Jumps up and claps her hands.*) Oh, dear! oh, dear! Christina, it is indeed delicious to live and be happy!—oh, but it is really horrible of me! I am talking about nothing but my own concerns (*sits down upon a footstool close to her and lays her arms on Christina's knee*). Oh! don't be angry with me for it. Now just tell me, is it really true that you couldn't endure your husband? Why ever did you marry him, then?

MRS. LINDEN. My mother was living at that time, and she was ill and helpless; and then I had my two younger

brothers to provide for. I considered it my duty to accept him.

NORA. Oh, yes. I dare say you were right there. Then he was rich in those days?

MRS. LINDEN. Very well off indeed, I believe. But his business was not sound, Nora. When he died it all fell to pieces, and there was nothing left.

NORA. And then?

MRS. LINDEN. Then I had to try to make my way by keeping a small shop, a little school, and anything else I could get. The last three years have been for me one long working day, without a moment's rest. But now it is over, Nora, dear. My poor mother no longer needs me: she is at rest in her grave. Nor do the boys need me: they are in business, and can provide for themselves.

NORA. How relieved you must feel!

MRS. LINDEN. No, Nora; only inexpressibly empty. To have nobody you can devote your life to! (*stands up restless*). That is why I could not bear to stay any longer in that out-of-the-way little town. It must be easier to find something here that really has a claim upon one and occupies one's thoughts. If I could but be so fortunate as to get a fixed post—some office work.

NORA. But, Christina, that is so terribly tiring, and you look so overdone already. It would be far better for you if you could go to some cheerful watering place for a while.

MRS. LINDEN (*going to the window*). I have no father who could give me the money to go, Nora.

NORA (*rising*). Oh! don't be vexed with me!

MRS. LINDEN (*going toward her*). No, it is rather I who must beg your indulgence, Nora, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one bitter. One has nobody to work for, and yet one is obliged to be always slaving and scraping together. Besides, one must live, and so one gets selfish. When you told me of the happy change in your circumstances—you'll hardly believe it—but I rejoiced more on my own account than on yours.

NORA. How do you mean? Ah! I see. You mean Torvald could do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; I thought so.

NORA. And he shall, too, Christina, dear. Just leave that

to me. I shall lead up to it in the most delicate manner in the world, and think of something pleasant in order to incline him favorably to it. Oh! I should so like to do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN. How good of you, Nora, to take up my cause so zealously—it is doubly good in you, who know so little of the troubles and difficulties of life.

NORA. I? I know so little of——

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling*). Bless me! a little fancy work, and things of that sort. You are a mere baby, Nora.

NORA (*tosses her head and paces the room*). I would not be so positive if I were you

MRS. LINDEN. Really?

NORA. You are like everybody else. You none of you think that I could be of any real use.

MRS. LINDEN. Come, come, darling——

NORA. —that I have had my trials, too, in this troublesome world.

MRS. LINDEN. Dear Nora, you have just finished telling me the whole story of your trials.

NORA. I dare say—the little ones. (*Softly.*) The big trials I haven't told you a word about.

MRS. LINDEN. What great trials? What do you mean?

NORA. You look at me so patronizingly, Christina; but you wouldn't if you knew all. You are proud of having worked so hard and so long for your mother.

MRS. LINDEN. I am sure I patronize nobody. But it is true that I am proud and glad that it was my privilege to secure my mother the evening time of her life tolerably free from care.

NORA. And you are also proud of having done all you did for your brothers.

MRS. LINDEN. It seems to me I have a right to be proud of it.

NORA. I quite agree. But now I will tell you something, Christina: I, too, have something to be proud and glad about.

MRS. LINDEN. I don't doubt it. But what do you mean?

NORA. Not so loud. Suppose Torvald were to hear! On no account must he or anybody know it, Christina; nobody but you.

MRS. LINDEN. What can it be, my dear?

NORA. Come over here (*draws her beside her on the sofa*). Yes . . . I too have something to be proud and glad about. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

MRS. LINDEN. Saved his life? How saved his life?

NORA. I told you about our Italian journey. But for that he must have died.

MRS. LINDEN. So I understood, dear; and your father gave you the needful money.

NORA (*smiling*). Yes; so Torvald and everybody else believes; but——

MRS. LINDEN. But——

NORA. Father didn't give us one penny. It was I who found the money.

MRS. LINDEN. You? The whole of that large sum?

NORA. Three hundred pounds. What do you say to that?

MRS. LINDEN. But, my dear Nora, how was it possible? Did you win it in some lottery?

NORA (*contemptuously*). In a lottery? Pooh! What would there have been clever in that?

MRS. LINDEN. Then wherever did you get it from?

NORA (*hums and smiles mysteriously*). H'm; tra-la-la-la!

MRS. LINDEN. For you certainly couldn't borrow it.

NORA. No? Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. My dear love! how could a wife without her husband's consent borrow such an important sum as that?

NORA (*throwing her head back*). Oh! when the wife is one who has some slight knowledge of business, a woman who knows how to set about things with a little wisdom, then——

MRS. LINDEN. But, Nora, I can't in the least comprehend——

NORA. Nor need you. It has never been stated that I borrowed the money. Perhaps I got it in another way (*throws herself back on the sofa*). I may have got it from some ardent swain or another. When anybody is so distractingly pretty as I am——

MRS. LINDEN. You are a fool, Nora.

NORA. Now I am sure you are intensely curious, Christina——

MRS. LINDEN. Listen to me for a moment, Nora, dear. Haven't you been a little indiscreet?

NORA (*sitting upright again*). Is it indiscreet to save one's husband's life?

MRS. LINDEN. It seems to me it was indiscreet that you, without his knowledge——

NORA. But he mightn't know anything about it. Can't you comprehend that? He was not to guess for a single moment how ill he was. The doctors told me, and me only, that his life was in danger, that nothing could save him but living for a time in the South. Don't you suppose I should have tried to manage it in some other way first? I laid before him how nice it would be for me if I could go a journey abroad such as other married ladies have been; I wept and prayed; I said he ought to consider my circumstances; it was really his duty to give me my own way; and then I hinted that he could, of course, borrow the money. But when I said that, Christina, he got almost angry. He said I was giddy, and that it was his duty as a husband not to yield to my tempers and fancies—yes, that was the word he used, I believe. Very well, I thought, "but saved your life must be"; and then I found a way to do it.

MRS. LINDEN. And did not your husband learn from your father that the money was not from him!

NORA. No; never. Father died within those few days. I meant to have let him into my secret and begged him to tell nothing. But as he was so ill . . . unhappily it was not necessary.

MRS. LINDEN. And have you never since then taken your husband into your confidence?

NORA. Dear me! What can you be thinking of? Tell him, when he is so strict on the point of not borrowing? And added to that—for Torvald, with his man's self-reliance, to know that he owed anything to me would be painful and humiliating to the last degree. It would entirely change the relation between us; our beautiful, happy home would never again be what it is now.

MRS. LINDEN. Will you never tell him?

NORA (*thoughtfully, half smiling*). Yes—later on perhaps—after many years, when I have ceased to be so pretty as I am now. You mustn't laugh at me. Of course I mean when Torvald is not so fond of me as he is now; when he no longer gets any amusement out of seeing me skipping

about, and dressing up and acting. Then it might be rather a good plan to have something in the background. (*Breaking off.*) What nonsense? That time will never come. Now, what do you say to my grand secret, Christina? Am I not of some real use? Moreover, you will believe me when I say the affair gave me much anxiety. It was really not easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. You must know, Christina, that in the world of business there is something that is called paying off, and quarterly interest, and they are always so terribly hard to tide over. That compelled me to pinch a little, here and there, wherever I could. I could not lay anything aside out of the housekeeping money, for of course Torvald had to live well. Nor could I let the children go about badly dressed. All I received for that purpose I had to expend on it. The dear, darling children!

MRS. LINDEN. And so your own personal expenses had to be restricted? Poor Nora!

NORA. Yes, naturally. It was the first thing I thought of. Whenever Torvald gave me money for clothes and similar things, I never used more than half of it; I always bought the simplest and cheapest materials. It is most fortunate that everything suits me so well; so Torvald never noticed anything wrong about my dress. But it was often very hard, Christina, dear. For it really is very nice to be beautifully dressed. Now, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. Indeed it is.

NORA. Well, and besides that, I had other sources of income. Last winter, for instance, I was so lucky as to get a heap of copying work to do. Then I used to shut myself up every evening and write far on into the night. Oh, sometimes I was so tired, so dreadfully tired. And yet it was amusing to work in that way and earn money; I almost felt as if I were a man.

MRS. LINDEN. But how much have you been able to pay off from this debt?

NORA. Well, now, that I can't precisely say. In business like this, you see, it is very hard to keep exact accounts. I only know that I paid everything back that I could scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know what to do next (*smiles*). Then I used to sit down here and imagine that a very rich old gentleman was in love with me.

MRS. LINDEN. What! Which gentleman?

NORA. Oh! a mere story—that he was now dead, and that when his will was opened, there stood in large letters: "Pay over at once everything of which I die possessed to that charming person, Mrs. Nora Helmer——"

MRS. LINDEN. But, dear Nora, what gentleman was it?

NORA. Dear, dear, can't you understand? The old gentleman never existed: it was only what I used to sit down and think and dream, when I positively had no notion where I could get any money from. But let us leave him alone—the tiresome old creature may stay wherever he is for aught I care; I don't trouble my head about him, or his will; for now I am freed from all further anxiety (*springing up*). Oh, Christina, the thought of it does one good. Free from cares! Free, quite free. To be able to play and romp about with the children; to have things tasteful and refined and comfortable in the house, exactly as Torvald likes it all to be! And then the spring will soon return with the glorious blue sky. Perhaps then we shall be able to have a short outing. Oh! perhaps I shall get a peep of the sea again. Oh, yes! indeed it is glorious to live and be happy. (*The hall doorbell rings.*)

MRS. LINDEN (*rising*). There is a ring. Perhaps I had better be going.

NORA. No; do stay. I am certain nobody will come in here. It is sure to be somebody to see Torvald.

SCENE IV

THE PRECEDING. ELLEN. *Then* KROGSTAD

ELLEN (*in the door to the hall*). If you please, ma'am, there is a gentleman who wishes to speak to Mr. Helmer.

NORA. The bank manager, you mean.

ELLEN. Yes, ma'am, if you please, ma'am; but I didn't know, as the doctor is with him——

NORA. Where is the gentleman?

KROGSTAD (*in the doorway to the hall*). It is I, Mrs. Helmer. (ELLEN *goes;* MRS. LINDEN *is confused, recovers herself, and turns away to the window.*)

NORA (*goes a step toward him, excited, half aloud*). You?

What does this mean? What do you want to speak with my husband about?

KROGSTAD. Bank business—to a certain extent. I hold a small post in the Joint Stock Bank, and your husband is now to be our chief, I hear.

NORA. So you wish to speak about——

KROGSTAD. Only about tiresome business, Mrs. Helmer; nothing in the world else.

NORA. Then will you be so kind as to take a seat in his office over there? (KROGSTAD *goes. She bows indifferently while she closes the door into the hall. Then she walks to the fireplace and looks to the fire.*)

SCENE V

NORA. MRS. LINDEN

MRS. LINDEN. Nora, who was that man?

NORA. A Mr. Krogstad. He used to be in the law.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; he was.

NORA. Do you know the man?

MRS. LINDEN. I used to know him—many years ago. He was in our town a long time as government lawyer.

NORA. Yes; that he is.

MRS. LINDEN. How altered he is!

NORA. He was very unhappily married.

MRS. LINDEN. And is he now a widower?

NORA. With a whole troop of children. There! now it's burning properly (*she puts the poker down and pushes the rocking-chair a little aside*).

MRS. LINDEN. He takes up *all sorts* of business, people say.

NORA. Does he? I dare say. I don't know. . . . But don't let us think of business—it is so tiresome.

SCENE VI

THE PRECEDING. RANK (*coming out of* HELMER'S *room*)

RANK (*still in the doorway, speaking over his shoulder*). No, no; I won't disturb you. I'll just go and chat to your

wife for a little while (*shuts the door and sees* MRS. LINDEN). Oh, I beg your pardon. I am in the way here too.

NORA. No, not in the least (*introduces them*). Dr. Rank —Mrs. Linden.

RANK. Oh, indeed, that is a name often heard in this house. I think I just passed you on the stairs as we entered.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; I go so very slowly. I can't bear much going upstairs.

RANK. Oh, I see; some slight accident.

MRS. LINDEN. It is really due to overfatigue.

RANK. No worse than that? Ah! then you have come to town to find some little recreation during the Christmas holiday-time.

MRS. LINDEN. I have come here to look for work.

RANK. May I ask if that is an approved remedy for overfatigue?

MRS. LINDEN. One must live, Dr. Rank.

RANK. Yes, the general view of the matter appears to be that it is necessary.

NORA. Come, Dr. Rank, you yourself want to live.

RANK. To be sure I do. However miserable I am, I should like to drag on as long as possible. And my patients all cherish the same wish. It is just the same with people who are morally rotten. At this very moment Helmer has got talking to him precisely such a moral hospital inmate as I mean.

MRS. LINDEN (*catching her breath*). Ah!

NORA. Whom do you mean?

RANK. Oh, it's a fellow called Krogstad, a lawyer, a man you know nothing whatever about—rotten to the very core of his character. But even he began the conversation, as though he were going to say something very important, by saying he must live.

NORA. Indeed? Then what did he want to talk to Torvald about?

RANK. I really don't know that; I only gathered that it had something to do with the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA. I didn't know that Krog—that this Mr. Krogstad had anything to do with the bank.

RANK. He has some sort of post there. (*To* MRS. LINDEN.) I don't know whether in your part of the country too

there are to be found the sort of men who haunt the place only to scent out moral rottenness, and thus get some advantageous post or another. The healthy have no chance against them.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, after all, it is better to open the door to the sick and get them safe in.

RANK (*shrugging his shoulders*). Yes, so people say. And it is that very consideration which turns society into a hospital. (NORA, *deep in her own thoughts, breaks into half-choked laughter and claps her hands.*)

RANK. What are you laughing about? Do you know what society is?

NORA. What do I care about stupid "society"? I was laughing over something quite different, something awfully funny. Tell me, Dr. Rank, are all the people employed at the bank now dependent on Torvald?

RANK. Is that what strikes you as so awfully funny?

NORA (*smiles and hums*). Leave me alone, leave me alone (*walks about the room*). Yes, to think that we—that Torvald has now so much influence over so many people really does give me enormous satisfaction (*takes the box from her pocket*). Doctor, will you have a sweetmeat?

RANK. Oh, dear, dear. Sweetmeats! I thought they were contraband here.

NORA. Yes; . . . but Christina brought me these.

MRS. LINDEN. What did you say, dear? I?

NORA. Oh, well, dear me! You needn't be so frightened. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald has forbidden them. The fact is, he is afraid I might spoil my teeth. But, oh, bother, just for once. It won't hurt, will it, Dr. Rank? (*Puts a sweetmeat into his mouth.*) And you too, Christina. And I will have one at the same time—only a tiny one, or at most two (*walks about again*). Yes, I really am now in a state of extraordinary happiness. There is only one thing in the world that I should really like.

RANK. Well, and what's that?

NORA. There's something that I should so like to say—but for Torvald to hear it.

RANK. Then why don't you say it to him?

NORA. Because I daren't, for it sounds so ugly.

MRS. LINDEN. Ugly?

RANK. In that case I would not advise you to say it. But you might say it to us, at any rate . . . Pluck up your courage. What is it that you would like to say in Helmer's presence——

NORA. I should like to shout with all my heart. . . . Oh! dash it all.

RANK. Are you out of your mind?

MRS. LINDEN. My dearest Nora!

RANK. Say it. There he is.

NORA (*hides the sweetmeat box*). *Hush-sh-sh.* (HELMER *comes out of his room, hat in hand, with his overcoat on his arm.*)

SCENE VII

THE PRECEDING. HELMER

NORA (*going toward him*). Well, Torvald, dear, and have you got rid of him?

HELMER. Yes; he's gone at last.

NORA. May I introduce you?—this is Christina, who has come to town.

HELMER. Christina? Pardon me, but I don't know——

NORA. Mrs. Linden, Torvald, dear—Christina Linden.

HELMER (*to* MRS. LINDEN). Ah, indeed! You are an early friend of my wife's, I dare say.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; we knew each other in old times.

NORA. And now only fancy! She has taken this long journey in order to speak to you.

HELMER. To speak to me!

MRS. LINDEN. Well, not actually——

NORA. The fact is, Christina is extraordinarily clever in counting-house work to begin with, and then she has such a great wish to work under a really able man, in order to learn even more than she knows already.

HELMER (*to* MRS. LINDEN). Very sensible indeed.

NORA. And when she heard you were made bank manager—you see the *Telegraph* has announced it to all the world—she started off and came here as fast as she could; and, Torvald, dear, for my sake you can do something for Christina. Now, can't you?

HELMER. It might not be impossible. I conclude you are a widow?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. And have already had some experience in office work?

MRS. LINDEN. A good deal.

HELMER. Well, then, it is highly probable I can find a niche for you.

NORA (*clapping her hands*). There now! there now!

HELMER. You have just come at a lucky moment, Mrs. Linden.

MRS. LINDEN. Oh! how can I thank you enough?

HELMER (*smiling*). There is no occasion to (*puts his overcoat on*). But to-day you must excuse me.

RANK. Wait; I'll go with you (*fetches his fur-lined coat from the hall and warms it at the fire*).

NORA. Don't be out long, dear Torvald.

HELMER. Only an hour; not longer.

NORA. Are you going also, Christina?

MRS. LINDEN (*putting on her walking things*). Yes; I must be off now and look for lodgings.

HELMER. Then perhaps we can go together.

NORA (*helping her*). How vexatious that we should have no spare room to offer you; but it really is quite impossible.

MRS. LINDEN. What are you dreaming about? Good-bye, dear Nora, and thank you for all your kindness.

NORA. Good-bye for a little while. Of course you'll come back this evening. And you too, Dr. Rank. What? if you feel well enough? Of course you will. Only be sure you wrap up warmly. (*They go out talking into the hall. Outside on the doorsteps are heard children's voices.*) There they are! there they are! (*She runs to the door and opens it.*)

SCENE VIII

THE PRECEDING. MARY ANN. THE CHILDREN

NORA. Come in! come in! (*bends down and kisses the children*). Oh! my sweet darling . . . Do you see them, Christina? Aren't they darlings?

RANK. Don't let's stand here in the draught talking folly.

HELMER. Come, Mrs. Linden; people who are not mothers won't be able to stand it if they stay here any longer. (RANK, HELMER, *and* MRS. LINDEN *go.* MARY ANN *enters the room with the children,* NORA *also, and shuts the door.*)

SCENE IX

NORA. MARY ANN. THE CHILDREN

NORA. How fresh and merry you look! And what rosy cheeks you have!—like apples and roses. (*The children talk all at once to her during the following.*) And so you have been having great fun? That is splendid. Oh, really! you have been giving Emmy and Bob a slide, both at once. Dear me! you are quite a man, Ivar. Oh, give her to me a little, Mary Ann. My sweetheart! (*Takes the smallest from the nurse and dances it up and down.*) Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What! did you have a game of snowballs as well? Oh! I ought to have been there. No, leave them, Mary Ann; I will take their things off. No, no, let me do it; it is so amusing. Go to the nursery for a while; you look so frozen. You'll find some hot coffee on the stove. (*The nurse goes to the room on the left. Nora takes off the children's things and throws them down anywhere, while she lets the children talk to each other and to her.*) Really! Then there was a big dog there who ran after you all the way home? But I'm sure he didn't bite you? No; dogs don't bite dear dolly little children. Don't peep into those parcels, Ivar. You want to know what that is? Yes, you are the only people who shall know. Oh, no, no, that is not pretty. What! must we have a game? What shall it be, then? Hide and seek? Yes, let us play hide and seek. Bob shall hide first. Am I to? Very well; I will hide first. (*She and the children play, with laughing and shouting, in the room and the adjacent one to the right. At last Nora hides under the table; the children come rushing in to look for her, but cannot find her, hear her half-choked laughter, rush to the table, lift up the cover, and see her. Stormy shouts. She creeps out, as though to frighten them. Fresh shouts. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the hall door. No one has heard*

it. Now the door is half opened, and KROGSTAD *is seen. He waits a little; the game is renewed.*

SCENE X

NORA. THE CHILDREN. KROGSTAD

KROGSTAD. Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer——

NORA (*with a suppressed cry turns round and half jumps up*). Oh! What do you want?

KROGSTAD. Excuse me; the inner hall door was ajar—somebody must have forgotten to shut it.

NORA (*standing up*). My husband is not at home, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD. I know it.

NORA. Indeed! Then what do you want here?

KROGSTAD. To say a few words to you.

NORA. To me? (*To the children softly.*) Go into the nursery to Mary Ann. What, dear? No, the strange man won't hurt mamma. When he is gone we will go on playing. (*She leads the children into the left-hand room and shuts the door behind them.*)

NORA (*uneasy, in suspense*). It was with me you wished to speak?

KROGSTAD. Yes.

NORA. To-day? But it is not yet the first——

KROGSTAD. No; to-day is Christmas Eve. It will depend upon yourself what kind of Christmas happiness is granted you.

NORA. What do you really want of me? I certainly can't to-day——

KROGSTAD. We won't discuss that beforehand. It is about another matter. You have a minute to spare?

NORA. Oh, yes, certainly; I have that, although——

KROGSTAD. Good. I was sitting over there in the restaurant, and I saw your husband cross the street.

NORA. Yes; well?

KROGSTAD. With a lady.

NORA. And what then?

KROGSTAD. May I ask if the lady was a certain Mrs. Linden?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Who has just arrived?

NORA. Yes. This morning.

KROGSTAD. I suppose she is an intimate friend of yours.

NORA. Certainly she is. But I don't understand——

KROGSTAD. I used to know her too.

NORA. I know you did.

KROGSTAD. Really? Then you know all about it. I thought as much. Now, may I ask whether Mrs. Linden is to have some post in the bank?

NORA. How can you allow yourself to catechise me in this way—you, a subordinate official of my husband's? But, since you have asked, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linden is to be employed at the bank. And it is I who took her by the hand, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD. Then my guess was right.

NORA (*walking up and down*). Oh! I should imagine one has a little wee bit of influence. It doesn't follow that because one is only a woman that . . . When one is in a dependent position, Mr. Krogstad, one ought to take the greatest care not to offend anybody who—h'm——

KROGSTAD. Who has influence?

NORA. Yes; just so.

KROGSTAD (*taking another tone*). Mrs. Helmer, will you have the kindness to employ your influence in my favor?

NORA. What? How do you mean?

KROGSTAD. Will you be so obliging as to take care that I retain my dependent position at the bank?

NORA. What is all this about? Who wants to take your post away, then?

KROGSTAD. Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance toward me. I can very well comprehend that it cannot be pleasant for your friend to meet me; and I can also comprehend now whom I have to thank for my dismissal.

NORA. But I assure you——

KROGSTAD. Oh, yes; make no bones about it; there is yet time, and I advise you to use your influence to prevent it.

NORA. But, Mr. Krogstad, I have absolutely no influence.

KROGSTAD. None? It seems to me you were saying just now yourself——

NORA. Of course you were not to understand me in that

sense. I! How can you think I should have such influence as that over my husband?

KROGSTAD. Oh, I've known your husband since our college days. I don't think he is firmer than other husbands are.

NORA. If you talk disparagingly of my husband I must request you to go.

KROGSTAD. You are very courageous, my dear madam.

NORA. I am no longer afraid of you. When New Year's Day is over I shall soon be out of the whole difficulty.

KROGSTAD (*controlling himself more*). Now just listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If needs be, I shall fight as though it were for my life in order to keep my small post in the bank.

NORA. Yes; it looks as if you would.

KROGSTAD. It is not only on account of the pay; that is the part of it that least matters to me. But it is something else. Well, I suppose I had better make a clean breast of it. Look here; it's this. Of course you know just what everybody else knows—that many years ago I once got into trouble.

NORA. I think I heard something of the sort.

KROGSTAD. The matter never came into court; but from that moment all paths were, as it were, barricaded to me. Then I threw myself into the kind of business which you know about. I was obliged to snatch at something, and I may say this much: I wasn't the worst of the men in that line. But now I ought to clear out of all business of that sort. My sons are growing up; on their account I must try to win back as much respectability as I possibly can. In that direction this post at the bank was the first step. And now your husband wants to push me back into the mire.

NORA. But I do assure you, Mr. Krogstad, it is really not in my power to help you.

KROGSTAD. Because you will not; but I have the means of compelling you to help me.

NORA. You don't intend to tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD. H'm! Supposing I were to tell him?

NORA. It would be scandalous of you (*with suppressed tears*). This secret, which is my joy and my pride, he shall not learn in such a vulgar, blunt way—and from you too. You want to put me to the most terrible annoyance.

KROGSTAD. Only annoyance?

NORA (*hotly*). But just do it; the consequences will be worse for you than anybody else; for then my husband will see clearly what a bad man you are, and then you certainly will not keep your post.

KROGSTAD. I asked if it were only domestic unpleasantness that you were afraid of?

NORA. If my husband gets to know about it he will, of course, pay the rest without delay; and then we have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD (*stepping a pace nearer*). Listen, Mrs. Helmer: either you have rather a weak memory, or you don't know much about business. In that case I must get you to go more deeply into the matter.

NORA. How will you do that?

KROGSTAD. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow £300 of me.

NORA. I knew nobody else.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find you the money.

NORA. And you did find it.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find you the money under certain conditions. You were just then so excited about your husband's illness, and so anxious to get hold of the money for your journey, that you probably did not think twice about the difficulties it involved. It is therefore not superfluous for me to remind you of them. Now, I promised to find you the money in exchange for an acknowledgment which I drew up.

NORA. Yes, and I signed it.

KROGSTAD. Very well. But then I added a few lines whereby your father became security for the debt. Your father was to sign this.

NORA. Was to? He did sign.

KROGSTAD. I had left the date blank; that is to say, your father was to insert the date on which he signed the document. Do you recollect this, Mrs. Helmer?

NORA. Yes, I believe——

KROGSTAD. Thereupon I gave you the piece of paper that you might send it to your father. Is not that so?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And of course you did so without delay; for

within five or six days you brought me back the acknowledgment duly signed by your father. Then you received from me the sum promised.

NORA. Well, to be sure; have I not paid it back punctually?

KROGSTAD. Very fairly; yes. But let us return to the matter we were speaking of. You were in great trouble at the time, Mrs. Helmer?

NORA. I was indeed.

KROGSTAD. Your father, too, was very seriously ill, I believe.

NORA. He was on his death-bed.

KROGSTAD. And died soon after?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Now, just tell me, Mrs. Helmer, whether by any chance you happen to recollect which day he died—which day of the month, I mean.

NORA. Father died on the twenty-ninth of September.

KROGSTAD. Quite correct; I have made inquiries about it. That is why I cannot explain a remarkable circumstance (*draws from his pocket a piece of writing*).

NORA. A remarkable circumstance? I do not know——

KROGSTAD. The remarkable circumstance, dear Mrs. Helmer, is, that your father signed this acknowledgment three days after his death.

NORA. What? I don't understand.

KROGSTAD. Your father died on the twenty-ninth of September. But just look here. Here your father has dated his signature October the 2d. Is not that remarkable, Mrs. Helmer? (NORA *is silent.*) Can you explain that to me? (NORA *continues silent.*) It is also striking that the words "October the 2d" and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I know. Now this may be explained by supposing that your father forgot to date it, and that somebody added the date by guess work before the fact of his death was known. There is nothing improper in that proceeding. But it is the signature of his name that my question relates to. And is it genuine, Mrs. Helmer? Was it really your father who with his own hand set his name here?

NORA (*after a short silence throws her head back and*

looks defiantly at him). No; it is I who wrote papa's name there.

KROGSTAD. And are you aware, moreover, that that is a dangerous admission?

NORA. Why? You will soon get your money.

KROGSTAD. May I be permitted one more question: Why did you not send the document to your father?

NORA. It was impossible. Father was then dangerously ill. If I had asked him for his signature I should also have had to tell him what I wanted the money for. But in his condition I really could not tell him that my husband's life hung by a thread. It was quite impossible.

KROGSTAD. Then it would have been better for you to give up the journey abroad.

NORA. That was impossible too. My husband's life depended on that journey. I could not give it up.

KROGSTAD. But did you not consider, then, that it was a fraud on me?

NORA. I could not take any heed of that. I did not care in the least about you. I could not endure you on account of all the hard-hearted difficulties you made, although you knew how ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD. Mrs. Helmer, you have evidently no clear idea what you have been really guilty of. But I can assure you it was nothing different from this, nor worse than this, that I once did, and that destroyed my entire position in society.

NORA. You? Do you want to make me believe that you would have dared to do a courageous act in order to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD. The laws inquire little into motives.

NORA. Then we must have very bad laws.

KROGSTAD. Bad, or not bad—if I lay this document before a court of law you will be judged according to the laws.

NORA. That I do not believe. Do you mean to tell me that a daughter has not the right to spare her old father, on his death-bed, care and worry? Do you mean to say that a wife has not the right to save her husband's life? I don't know the law precisely, but I am convinced that somewhere or another the law must contain leave for me to have done such things. And you don't know it—you, a lawyer. You must be a bad lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD. I dare say. But business—such business as ours here—I do understand; you believe that? Very well. Now, do as you please. But this I do say to you: that if I am turned out of society a second time, you shall keep me company. (*He bows and goes out through the hall.*)

SCENE XI

NORA. *Then the* CHILDREN

NORA (*stands a while thinking, then she throws her head back*). Never! To try to frighten me! I am not so simple as that. (*Begins folding the children's clothes; pauses.*) But . . . no; but that is quite impossible. I did it from love.

THE CHILDREN (*in the left door*). Mamma, the strange man is gone now.

NORA. Yes, yes; I know. But don't tell anyone about the strange man. Do you hear? Not even papa.

THE CHILDREN. No, mamma; but now will you play with us again?

NORA. No, no; not now.

THE CHILDREN. Oh, do, mamma. You did promise.

NORA. Yes; but I can't just now. Run to the nursery; I have so much to do. Run along, run along, my dear, good children. (*She compels them gently to go into the inner room, and shuts the door behind them.*)

SCENE XII

NORA. *Then* ELLEN

NORA (*throws herself on the sofa, takes a piece of embroidery and does a few stitches, but soon pauses*). No (*throws the embroidery down, stands up, goes to the door toward the hall, and calls out*). Ellen, bring in the Christmas tree. (*Goes to the left-hand table and opens the drawer; stands again, thoughtful.*) No; but that is quite impossible.

ELLEN (*with the Christmas tree*). Where shall I stand it, if you please, ma'am?

NORA. There in the middle of the room.

ELLEN. Shall I bring in anything else?

NORA. No, thank you; I have what I want. (ELLEN, *who has put down the tree, goes out again.*) NORA (*busy dressing the tree*). There must be a candle here, and some flowers there.—The horrid man!—Nonsense, nonsense; there is nothing wrong in it. . . . The Christmas tree shall be beautiful. I will do everything that gives you pleasure, Torvald; I will sing, and dance, and——

SCENE XIII

NORA. HELMER (*from out of doors, with a bundle of documents under his arm*)

NORA. Oh! are you back already?

HELMER. Yes. Has anybody been here?

NORA. Here? No.

HELMER. Curious! I saw Krogstad come out of the house.

NORA. Did you? Oh, yes, it is true he was here for a minute.

HELMER. Nora, I can see from your manner he has been here, and asked you to put in a good word for him.

NORA. Yes.

HELMER. And you were to do it as of your own accord? You were to say nothing to me of his having been here?

NORA. Yes, Torvald; but——

HELMER. Nora, Nora! and you could bring yourself to do that? to allow yourself to be drawn into talk with such a man, and give him a promise. And then tell me an untruth about it?

NORA. An untruth?

HELMER. Didn't you say nobody had been here? (*Threatens with his finger.*) My lark must never do that again. A little singing bird must never sing false notes (*puts his arm round her*). That's true, isn't it? Yes, I knew it (*lets her go*). And now we'll say no more about it (*sits down before the fire*). Oh, how comfortable and quiet it is here (*glances into his documents*).

NORA (*busy with the tree, after a short silence*). Torvald.

HELMER. Yes.

NORA. I am so excessively delighted over the Steinbergs' costume ball the day after to-morrow.

HELMER. And I am so excessively curious to see what you will surprise me with.

NORA. Oh! that's the tiresome part of it.

HELMER. How do you mean?

NORA. I can't find anything to suit me. Everything seems so silly and meaningless.

HELMER. Has my little Nora arrived at *that* opinion?

NORA (*behind his chair with her arms on the back*). Are you very busy, Torvald?

HELMER. Eh?

NORA. What sort of papers are those?

HELMER. Papers concerning the bank.

NORA. Already?

HELMER. I got the retiring authorities to give me full power beforehand to make the necessary changes in the staff and method of working. This is what I must spend my Christmas week in arranging. By New Year's Day I will have everything in order.

NORA. Then this is why that poor Krogstad——

HELMER. H—m——

NORA (*leaning farther over the chair, strokes his hair*). If your work were not so pressing I should ask you a great, great favor, Torvald.

HELMER. Let's hear it. What can it be?

NORA. Nobody has such defined taste as you have. Now I should so love to look well at the costume ball. Torvald, dear, couldn't you take me in hand and settle what character I am to appear in, and how my costume ought to be arranged?

HELMER. Is that obstinate little head of yours puzzled at last, and looking about for somebody to save it from destruction?

NORA. Yes, Torvald. Without you I am utterly helpless.

HELMER. Well, well; I'll think it over; we will soon hit upon something together.

NORA. Oh, how kind and good that is of you (*goes to the tree again; pauses*). How pretty the red flowers look. But, by the by, was the . . . thing which Krogstad got into trouble about years ago really so bad?

HELMER. Forged a name, that's all. Have you any notion what that means?

NORA. Mustn't he have done it from need?

HELMER. Yes, or, as so many others do it, from heedlessness. I am not so heartless as to judge anybody absolutely from such a transaction alone.

NORA. No; that's just what I thought you would say, Torvald.

HELMER. Many a man can lift himself up again morally if he openly recognizes his offense and undergoes its punishment.

NORA. Punishment?

HELMER. As a lawyer, darling child, I have remarked he tried to work his way out of it by dodges and tricks, and by that very means he has morally ruined himself.

NORA. Do you think that it——

HELMER. Only just think how a man so conscious of guilt as that must go about everywhere lying, and a hypocrite, and an actor; how he must wear a mask toward his neighbor, and even his wife and children, his own children. That's the worst, Nora?

NORA. Why?

HELMER. Because such a misty atmosphere of lying brings contagion into the whole family. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil.

NORA (*closer behind him*). Are you quite sure?

HELMER. As a lawyer, darling child, I have remarked that many a time. Nearly all men who go to ruin early have had untruthful mothers.

NORA. Why should it be—mothers?

HELMER. In most cases it comes from the mother; but the father naturally works in the same direction. Every lawyer has reason to know that. And Krogstad has actually been poisoning his own children for years past by lying and acting a part; that is precisely why I call him morally lost. (*Stretches out his hands to her.*) This is the reason why my dear little Nora must not plead on his behalf. Shake hands upon it. Come, come; what's that? Give me your hand. That's right. Then it's a bargain. I do assure you it would have been impossible to me to work with him. I feel bodily discomfort when I am in any proximity to such people.

NORA (*takes her hand away and goes to the other side of the Christmas tree*). How warm it is here. And I have so much to do still.

HELMER (*rises and puts his papers together*). Yes, I must take care to get some of these papers read through before dinner; and I will think over your costume too. And I should not be surprised if I were to get ready some trifle that might be hung in gilt paper on the Christmas tree. (*Lays his hand upon her head.*) My dear little lark. (*He goes into his room and shuts the door behind him.*)

SCENE XIV

NORA. *Then* MARY ANN

NORA (*slowly, after a pause*). What was it? It can't be so . . . That is impossible. It must be impossible.

MARY ANN (*in the left door*). The little ones are begging so prettily to come in to mamma.

NORA. No, no; don't let them come in to me. Let them stay with you, Mary Ann.

MARY ANN. Very well, ma'am (*shuts the door*).

NORA (*pale with terror*). I ruin my children . . . poison my home. (*Short pause. She raises her head proudly.*) That is not true. It is never, and can never be, true.

ACT II

THE SAME ROOM

(*In the corner beside the piano stands the Christmas tree, stripped, shabby, and with the candles burned out. On the sofa* NORA'S *walking things.*)

SCENE I

NORA (*alone. She walks about restlessly. At last stands by the sofa and takes her cloak. After a minute's reflection she lets it fall again on to the sofa*). There's somebody coming. (*Goes to the door, listens.*) No; nobody. Nobody is

likely to come to-day, Christmas Day, nor to-morrow either. But perhaps . . . (*opens the door and peeps out*). No. Nothing in the letter box; it's quite empty. (*Comes to the front of the stage.*) Stuff and nonsense! Of course he will do nothing serious in it. Nothing of the kind can possibly happen. It is impossible. Why, I have three little children.

SCENE II

MARY ANN *coming out of the left room with a large paper cardboard box*

MARY ANN. At last I've found the box with the masquerade dress.

NORA. Thanks; put it down on the table there.

MARY ANN (*does so*). But it is still very much out of order, ma'am.

NORA. Oh, I wish I could tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

MARY ANN. Good gracious, ma'am! Why, it can be easily put to rights; it only wants a little patience.

NORA. Yes; I will go to Mrs. Linden and get her to help me.

MARY ANN. What! out again, ma'am? In this dreadful weather? You'll catch your death of cold, ma'am, and be quite ill.

NORA. Oh, that's not the worst thing that could happen. What are the children doing?

MARY ANN. They're playing with their Christmas presents, dear little things; but——

NORA. Do they often ask after me?

MARY ANN. Well, you see, ma'am, they have been so used to having their mamma always with them.

NORA. Yes; but, Mary Ann, henceforth I can't have them so much with me as hitherto.

MARY ANN. Well, ma'am, little children get used to anything.

NORA. Do you think they do? Do you believe that they would forget their mother if she went quite away?

MARY ANN. Gracious me, ma'am; quite away?

NORA. Tell me, Mary Ann—I've so often wondered about

it—how could you bring yourself to give your child up to strangers?

MARY ANN. But I was obliged to, if I wanted to come as nurse to my little Miss Nora, ma'am.

NORA. Yes; but that you could want to.

MARY ANN. When I could get such a good place, ma'am? A poor girl who's been in trouble could only be very glad to come; for that wicked man did nothing for me.

NORA. But of course your daughter has forgotten you?

MARY ANN. Oh, no, ma'am, not in the least. She wrote to me both when she was confirmed and when she got married.

NORA (*embracing her*). Dear Mary Ann, you were a good mother to me when I was a little girl.

MARY ANN. My poor little Miss Nora had no mother but me.

NORA. And if my little children had nobody else I am sure you would . . . Nonsense, nonsense (*opens the box*). Go to them in the nursery. Now I must . . . To-morrow you shall see how beautifully this dress suits me.

MARY ANN. Yes, ma'am, I'm sure there will be nobody so beautiful at the whole ball as my Miss Nora. (*She goes into the left room.*)

NORA (*begins taking the costume out of the box, then soon throws it down again*). Oh, if I could go away. If only nobody would come. If only nothing would happen here at home meanwhile. Rubbish! nobody will come. Only not to think . . . Stroke one's muff smooth. Beautiful gloves, beautiful gloves . . . Away with the whole thing, away with it . . . One, two, three, four, five, six. (*With a cry.*) Oh! there comes the . . . (*goes toward the door, but stands undecided*).

SCENE III

NORA. MRS. LINDEN (*comes from the hall, where she has taken off her things*)

NORA. Oh, it is you, Christina. Is nobody else there? How delightful of you to come.

MRS. LINDEN. I hear you have called at my lodgings to ask for me.

NORA. Yes, I was just passing. There is something I

wanted you to help me with. Let us sit here on the sofa. Look here. To-morrow evening there is a costume ball at Consul Steinberg's overhead, and now Torvald wants me to appear as a Neapolitan fisher girl, and dance the tarantella, because I *did* learn it in Capri.

MRS. LINDEN. I see, dear. Then you are to give quite a representation of the character?

NORA. Yes; Torvald wishes me to. Look! here is the costume. Torvald had it made for me in Italy; but now it is all so torn, and I hardly know——

MRS. LINDEN. Oh! we'll soon set that to rights for you. It is only the trimming that has got loose here and there. Have you a needle and thread? Ah! there's the very thing we want.

NORA. How kind it is of you.

MRS. LINDEN (*sewing*). If you're going to dress up to-morrow, Nora, I tell you what—I shall come in for a moment in order to see you in all your glory. But I have quite forgotten to thank you for the pleasant evening you gave me yesterday.

NORA (*looks up and walks across the room*). Ah! yesterday it didn't seem to me so pleasant here as it generally is. . . . You should have come to town sooner, Christina. Yes, Torvald knows how to make our home beautiful and pleasant.

MRS. LINDEN. And so do you, I think; or you would not be your father's daughter. But tell me—is Dr. Rank always so depressed as he was yesterday evening?

NORA. It was particularly striking yesterday. He really has a terrible illness that accounts for it. He has spinal consumption, poor wretch. You see his father was an awful man who did all sorts of wrong things, and so of course his son has been ill from his childhood.

MRS. LINDEN (*lets her sewing fall into her lap*). But, my dearest, loveliest Nora, how do you learn such things?

NORA (*walking*). Oh! when one has three children one is sometimes called upon by . . . women who have a little medical knowledge, and happen to chat about one thing or another.

MRS. LINDEN (*goes on sewing; short pause*). Does Dr. Rank come here every day?

NORA. He never misses. He has been Torvald's friend

from boyhood, you know, and is a good friend of mine too. Dr. Rank is quite one of the family.

MRS. LINDEN. But just tell me, dear: is the man quite honest? I mean, doesn't he like saying flattering things to people?

NORA. On the contrary. What makes you think so?

MRS. LINDEN. When you introduced us yesterday he declared he had often heard my name in the house; but then I noticed your husband had no notion who I was. How, then, could Dr. Rank?

NORA. You are right, Christina. But you see, dear Torvald loves me so indescribably much; and so he wants to have me all to himself, as he expresses it. When we first married he was almost jealous if I did but mention one of the people I lived with at home, so I naturally ceased to mention them. But I often talk to Dr. Rank about it, for he loves to hear me babble on.

MRS. LINDEN. Dear Nora, in many things you are still just like a child. I am somewhat older than you are, and have a little more experience. I will tell you something: you ought to put an end to the whole affair with this doctor.

NORA. What affair?

MRS. LINDEN. Both affairs, it seems to me. Yesterday you were telling me about a rich admirer who was to furnish you with money.

NORA. Yes, and who never existed, more's the pity. But what then?

MRS. LINDEN. Has Dr. Rank property?

NORA. Yes, he has.

MRS. LINDEN. And nobody to provide for?

NORA. Nobody. But——

MRS. LINDEN. And he comes here every day?

NORA. Yes; I tell you he never misses.

MRS. LINDEN. But how can he, as a gentleman, be so intrusive?

NORA. I really don't understand you.

MRS. LINDEN. Don't pretend, Nora. Don't you suppose I did not guess from whom you borrowed the £300.

NORA. Are you out of your senses? You think that? A friend of the family who comes here every day to us! What a terrible, torturing state of things it would be!

MRS. LINDEN. Then it really is not he?

NORA. No; that I do assure you. It never for a moment occurred to me to ask him. Besides, at that time he had nothing to lend; it was later that he came into his property.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, that was certainly lucky for you, Nora, dear.

NORA. No, really, it never would have struck me to ask Dr. Rank. However, I am certain that if I did——

MRS. LINDEN. But of course you never would——

NORA. I should think not, indeed. Nor do I believe it will be necessary. But I am firmly convinced that if I said to Dr. Rank——

MRS. LINDEN. Behind your husband's back?

NORA. I must get out of the other loan; that I had to manage behind his back too. I must get out of that.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes, you were saying so yesterday; but——

NORA (*walking up and down*). A man can get things into better order somehow than a woman can——

MRS. LINDEN. Her own husband; yes.

NORA. Nonsense. (*Stands still.*) When one pays everything off that one owes, one gets back the acknowledgment of the debt?

MRS. LINDEN. Of course.

NORA. And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces and burn the nasty, horrid thing!

MRS. LINDEN (*looks at her fixedly, lays down her work, and looks up slowly*). Nora, you are hiding something from me.

NORA. Can you see that in my manner?

MRS. LINDEN. Since yesterday morning something has been happening to you. Nora, what is it?

NORA (*going toward her*). Christina. (*Listens.*) Hush. There's Torvald coming home. Here, go and sit with the children. Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking. Let Mary Ann help you.

MRS. LINDEN (*gathers some of the things together*). Very well; but I sha'n't go away until we have spoken openly to each other. (*She goes away to the left as* HELMER *enters from the hall.*)

SCENE IV

NORA. HELMER

NORA (*goes to meet him*). Oh! how I have been longing to see you, Torvald, dear.

HELMER. Was the dressmaker here?

NORA. No; Christina. She is helping me to get my costume into order. You will see I shall look perfectly charming.

HELMER. Yes; wasn't that an extremely lucky thought of mine?

NORA. Glorious! But is it not also very beautiful of me to give in to you?

HELMER (*takes her under the chin*). Beautiful of you—that you give in to your own husband! Why, you little rogue, I know very well you didn't mean anything of the sort. But I won't disturb you. I dare say you want to be fitting on your dress.

NORA. And I dare say you're going to work?

HELMER. Yes (*shows her a bundle of documents*). Look here. I was at the bank just now (*is about to go to his room*).

NORA. Torvald.

HELMER (*stands still*). Yes?

NORA. If your little squirrel were to ask you for something very prettily and seriously—

HELMER. Then?

NORA. Would you do it?

HELMER. Naturally I should first expect to be told what it is.

NORA. The little squirrel would jump about and perform all sorts of funny tricks if you would be amiable and do as you are asked.

HELMER. Come, then; out with it.

NORA. The little lark would twitter round in all the rooms, loud and soft by turns——

HELMER. Oh, there's nothing in that. She does all that as it is.

NORA. I would act a fairy, and dance in the moonshine, Torvald.

HELMER. Nora, you can't mean what you were begging me about this morning?

NORA (*coming nearer*). Yes, Torvald, I do beg you *so*.

HELMER. Have you really courage to mention the matter again to me?

NORA. Yes, yes. You must grant my request. You must let Krogstad keep his place at the bank.

HELMER. My dear Nora, I have arranged for his place to be given to Mrs. Linden.

NORA. Yes, and that was very nice of you. But instead of Krogstad, you could dismiss some other clerk.

HELMER. That would be incredibly absurd. Because you heedlessly promised to put in a word for him, I am to——

NORA. Not for that reason, Torvald. It is for your own sake. The man is on the staff of some of our most scurrilous newspapers; I have heard you say so myself. He can do you such infinite harm. I am so terribly afraid of him.

HELMER. Oh, I understand; it is old recollections that are frightening you.

NORA. Why do you say that?

HELMER. Of course you are thinking of your father.

NORA. Yes, to be sure. Only call to mind what wicked men used to write about father in the papers, and how shamefully they calumniated him. I believe they really would have got him dismissed if government had not sent you down to look into the matter, and if you had not been so kindly and considerate toward him.

HELMER. My dear Nora, between your father and me there is all the difference in the world. Your father was not, as an official, quite unimpeachable. But I am; and I hope to remain so as long as I am at my post.

NORA. Oh, you don't in the least comprehend how wicked men find out all sorts of things to say. We could be so well off now, and live so quietly and happily in our peaceful home, free from any kind of care, you and I and the children, Torvald! This is why I beg you so earnestly.

HELMER. And it is just by your throwing yourself into the matter that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the bank that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. If it were now to be known that the new bank manager let himself be talked round by his wife——

NORA. Well, then?

HELMER. If only the obstinate little woman can get her own way, of course that is all she wants. . . . I am to make myself the laughing stock of all the clerks, and set people saying I am under outside influence. Take my word for it, I should soon trace the consequences. And, besides, there is one circumstance that makes Krogstad an impossible person to have at the bank while I am manager there

NORA. What circumstance?

HELMER. In case of necessity I could perhaps have overlooked his moral fault——

NORA. Yes, couldn't you, Torvald?

HELMER. And by what I hear he must be quite content. But we knew each other in early youth. It is one of those hasty acquaintances that so often hamper one in later life. In fact, the whole difficulty lies in his calling me Torvald. And the tactless creature makes no secret of it when other people are present. On the contrary, he fancies it justifies his taking a familiar tone with me; and so he blurts out at every turn, "I say, Torvald": I do assure you it causes me most painful emotion. He would make my position at the bank perfectly unendurable to me.

NORA. Torvald, you are not serious in saying all this.

HELMER. Not? Why not?

NORA. All these are such petty considerations.

HELMER. What are you saying? Petty consid— Do you consider me petty?

NORA. No, on the contrary, Torvald, dear; and that is just why——

HELMER. It's all the same. You call my reasons petty; then I must be petty too. Petty! Very well then. Now we'll put an end to this once and for all. (*Goes to the door into the hall and calls.*) Ellen!

NORA. What do you want to do?

HELMER (*searching among his papers*). To put an end to the whole affair.

SCENE V

THE PRECEDING. ELLEN

HELMER (*to* ELLEN). There, take the letter. Give it to a messenger. But see that he takes it at once. The address is on it. Here is the money for him.

SCENE VI

NORA. HELMER

HELMER (*putting his papers in order*). There, my obstinate little wife.

NORA (*as though out of her mind*). Torvald, what letter was that?

HELMER. Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA. Fetch it back again, Torvald. There is still time. Oh, Torvald, get it back again. Do it for my sake—for your own sake—for our children's sake. Do you hear? Torvald, do it. You don't know what that letter has the power to bring upon us all.

HELMER. Too late.

NORA. Yes, too late.

HELMER. Dear Nora, I forgive you your anxiety, although it is founded upon what is wounding to me. Yes, that is what it really is. Or perhaps it is no offense to me for you to believe I should be afraid of the revenge of a disgraced newspaper scribbler? But I forgive it you, because it is all the time a charming proof of your great love for me (*takes her in his arms*). It must be so, my dear, darling Nora. Let what will befall us. If I am called upon for it, I have not only courage, but the strength too, you know. You shall see I am powerful enough to take everything upon my shoulders.

NORA (*suddenly terrified*). What do you mean by that?

HELMER. Everything, I say.

NORA (*decidedly*). That you shall never, never do.

HELMER. Very well; then we will share it, Nora, as man and wife, just as we ought to do (*strokes her*). Are you satisfied now? Come, come, come; don't let me see those

eyes looking like a scared dove's. It is all your own fancy. Now you must act the tarantella, and practice the tambourine. I shall go and sit in my other office and shut the double door, so that I shall hear nothing. You can make as much noise as ever you please (*turns round in the doorway*), and when Rank comes, just tell him where I am to be found.

SCENE VII

NORA. *Then* RANK. *Later* ELLEN

NORA (*shaken with anxiety, stands as though rooted to the ground, and whispers*). He had it in his power to do it. Yes; he did it. He did it in spite of all and everything I said. No; never that, to all Eternity. Rather anything than that! Save me! Oh, for some way out of it. (*The hall doorbell rings.*) Dr. Rank! Rather anything than that, whatever it may be. (*She drags herself slowly along, with her hand over her face, goes to the door and opens it.* RANK *stands outside and hangs up his greatcoat. During the following scene it grows dark.*) Good afternoon, Dr. Rank. I knew you by your ring. But you must not go to Torvald now, for I believe he has some work to do.

RANK. And you?

NORA (*as he walks into the room, and she shuts the door behind him*). Oh, you know perfectly well I have always a spare moment for you.

RANK. Thank you. I shall avail myself of your kindness as long as ever I can.

NORA. What does that mean? As long as ever you can?

RANK. Yes; does that frighten you?

NORA. You express yourself so curiously. Does it mean you have got to know something?

RANK. Something about which I have long been convinced; but I did not think it would come off quite so soon.

NORA (*seizing his arm*). What is it you have got to know? Dr. Rank, you must tell me.

RANK (*sitting down by the stove*). I am running down hill. There is no help for it.

NORA (*breathing with relief*). You are the one, then, who——

RANK. Who else should it be? Why deceive oneself? I am the most miserable of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. In the last few days I have had a general stock-taking of my inner man. Bankruptcy! Before a month is over I shall be food for worms in the churchyard.

NORA. Oh, what ugly things you say!

RANK. The thing itself is so cursed ugly. But the worst of it is, that so many other ugly things have to be gone through first. There is only one investigation to be made, and when I have made it I shall know exactly at what time dissolution will begin. There is something I want to say to you about that. Helmer has stamped on his refined nature such a hatred for all that is ugly; I will not have him in my sick room.

NORA. But, Dr. Rank——

RANK. I will not have him in my sick room—upon any condition whatsoever. I close my door against him. As soon as I obtain completely certain information as to the worst, I shall send you my visiting card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the horrors of dissolution have begun.

NORA. Come, this is too bad of you. The things you are saying, too, are too disagreeable for anything. And I was so particularly anxious you should be in a really good temper.

RANK. With death staring me in the face? And all by way of penance for the faults of other people. What justice is there in that? Just such compensation is being exacted, inexorably, after one fashion or another, in every family.

NORA (*stopping her ears*). Nonsense. Do be funny, funny!

RANK. Yes, really, the whole story is only worth laughing at. My poor innocent spine must do penance for my father's notions of amusement when he was a lieutenant in the army.

NORA (*at the left table*). I suppose he was devoted to asparagus and Strasburg pies, wasn't he?

RANK. Certainly, and to truffles.

NORA. Yes, devoted to truffles, to be sure, and to oysters, I believe.

RANK. Yes, to oysters; no need to mention that; oysters, of course.

NORA. And then all the port wine and champagne. It is sad that all these dainties should affect the bones so disastrously.

RANK. Especially when the bones so disastrously affected never got the least advantage from the dainties.

NORA. Yes; that is the saddest part of it.

RANK (*looks at her searchingly*). H—m——

NORA (*a moment later*). Why were you smiling?

RANK. No; it was you who smiled.

NORA. No, you, Dr. Rank.

RANK (*standing up*). You are really a greater rogue than I thought.

NORA. To-day I am just inclined to play all sorts of tricks.

RANK. It seems like it.

NORA (*with her hands on his shoulders*). Dear, good Dr. Rank, death shall not take you away from Torvald and me.

RANK. Oh, you will easily get over the loss. People who go away are soon forgotten.

NORA (*looking at him anxiously*). Do you think so?

RANK. People make fresh ties, and then——

NORA. Who will make fresh ties?

RANK. You and Helmer, as soon as I am gone. In fact, *you* are already setting about it, it seems to me. What was this Mrs. Linden doing here yesterday?

NORA. Oh, that's it? But you don't mean to say you're jealous of poor Christina?

RANK. Yes, I am. She will be my successor here in your house. This woman will probably——

NORA. Hush! Not so loud; she is in there.

RANK. To-day, as well? There, just what I said!

NORA. Only to put my costume in order. But, really, what odious things you are saying (*sits on the sofa*). Now, do just be sensible, Dr. Rank; to-morrow you shall see how beautifully I dance, and then you may fancy, if you like, that I am doing it all to please you only, and of course Torvald as well—of course (*takes various things out of the cardboard box*). Dr. Rank, sit over here; I will show you something.

RANK (*sitting down*). What is it?

NORA. Look here. Do you see these?

RANK. Silk stockings.

NORA. Flesh-colored. Aren't they lovely? Oh, it's so dark here now; but to-morrow. . . . No, no, no, you must only look at the feet. Very well, I give you leave to look at the rest too.

RANK. H—m!

NORA. What are you looking so critical about? Don't you think they would fit me?

RANK. It is impossible I should have any settled opinion on that point.

NORA (*looking at him a moment*). For shame (*hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings*). Take that for it (*puts them in the box again*).

RANK. And what other splendid things have you got there that I was to see?

NORA. You won't be allowed to see anything more, for you don't behave nicely. (*She hums a little and searches among the things.*)

RANK (*after a short silence*). When I am sitting here in such perfect intimacy with you, I simply can't imagine what would have become of me if I had never entered this house.

NORA (*smiling*). Yes, I really think you like being with us.

RANK (*more softly, looking straight before him*). And now I must go away from it all.

NORA. Nonsense! You won't go away from us.

RANK (*in the same tone*). And not be able to leave behind me the smallest sign of thanks; scarcely a passing thought of regret—nothing but an empty place that can be filled by the next comer as well as by anybody else.

NORA. And if I were to ask you now for . . . No.

RANK. For what?

NORA. For a great proof of your friendship.

RANK. Well, well?

NORA. No, I mean—for a very, very great service.

RANK. Would you really for once make me so happy as that would make me?

NORA. Oh, you have no notion yet what it is.

RANK. Very well; please tell me directly.

NORA. But I can't; it is such an extraordinarily great thing. Not only a service, but advice and help besides.

RANK. So much the better. I can't imagine what you can mean. But do go on. Don't you trust me?

NORA. Yes, as I trust nobody else. You are my best and most faithful friend. I know that. For that reason I will tell you what it is. Well, then, Dr. Rank, you must help me to hinder something. You know how deeply, how indescribably Torvald loves me; he would not hesitate a moment to give his very life for mine.

RANK (*bending toward her*). Nora, do you think, then, that he is the only one who would——

NORA (*with slight hesitation*). Who?

RANK. Who would gladly give his life for you?

NORA (*sadly*). Oh!

RANK. I had sworn that you should know it before I went away forever. I should never find a better opportunity. Yes, Nora, now you know it. And now you know, too, that you can trust yourself to me as you could to no one else.

NORA (*stands up simply and calmly*). Let me pass, please.

RANK (*makes way for her, but sits still*). Nora.

NORA (*in the door to the hall*). Ellen, bring the lamp. (*Walks to the stove.*) Oh, dear Dr. Rank, that was too bad of you.

RANK (*standing up*). That I love you devotedly as no one else does? Was that too bad of me?

NORA. No; but that you should tell me so. It was really not necessary.

RANK. What do you mean? Did you know it then? (ELLEN *comes in with the lamp, sets it down on the table, and goes out again.*) Nora, Mrs. Helmer, I ask you, did you know anything of it?

NORA. Oh, what do I know as to whether I knew or didn't know? I really can't say. . . . But that you could possibly be so clumsy. Everything was going on so beautifully.

RANK. Well, at any rate you know now for certain that I am quite at your disposal, soul and body. And now speak on.

NORA (*looking at him*). Speak on now?

RANK. I beg you to tell me what it is you want.

NORA. Now I can't say anything more to you.

RANK. Oh, dear, dear! you must not punish me in that

way. Give me leave to do for you whatever is in a man's power.

NORA. You cannot do anything more for me now. And, besides, I want no help from any stranger. You shall see it was all my imagination. Yes, mere imagination on my part. Of course. (*Sits in the rocking-chair, looks at him, smiles.*) Yes, you really are a charming gentleman, Dr. Rank. Now just tell me, aren't you ashamed of yourself now that the lamp is on the table?

RANK. No, indeed, I am not. But perhaps I ought to go, and forever?

NORA. No; you needn't do that. You are to come to us as you always have come. You know very well that Torvald can't do without you.

RANK. Yes; but you?

NORA. Oh, it always gives me the greatest pleasure to have you with us.

RANK. That is just what led me to mistake my path. You are a riddle to me. It often seemed to me as though you would almost as gladly spend your time with me as with Helmer.

NORA. Yes—don't you see? one loves one person, and likes spending time with another.

RANK. Ah, there's some truth in that.

NORA. When I was still a girl at home I naturally loved papa beyond all else. But it always delighted me when I could steal into the maids' room; for, in the first place, they never lectured me, and in the second, it was always so merry there.

RANK. Oh, I see; then it is *their* place I have taken.

NORA (*jumps up and hurries toward him*). Oh! dear, good Dr. Rank, I never meant that. But you can very well imagine that I feel about Torvald just as I used to feel about father.

ELLEN (*coming from the hall*). Please, ma'am. (*Whispers in her ear and gives her a card.*)

NORA (*glances at the card*). Ah! (*Puts it in her pocket.*)

RANK. Something disagreeable up?

NORA. No, not in the least. It is only—it is my new costume.

RANK. How can it be? It's there.

NORA. Oh, that one, yes; but it's another, that . . . I ordered it. . . . Torvald is not to know.

RANK. Oh, indeed. So that's the great secret.

NORA. Yes, to be sure. Do just go into his room; he is in the one beyond that one; do keep him as long as you can.

RANK. Make yourself easy; he sha'n't get away from me (*goes into* HELMER'S *room*).

NORA (*to* ELLEN). Then he is waiting in the kitchen?

ELLEN. Yes; he came to the back door.

NORA. But did you not tell him I had a visitor with me?

ELLEN. Yes, ma'am; but it was no use.

NORA. He really will not go away, then?

ELLEN. No, ma'am; not until he has spoken with you.

NORA. Then let him come in, but quietly. And say nothing about it, Ellen; it is a surprise for my husband.

ELLEN. Oh, yes, ma'am; I quite understand (*goes*).

NORA. The terrible thing is coming. It is here already. No, no, no; it can never happen; it shall not. (*She goes to* HELMER'S *door and slips the bolt.* ELLEN *opens the hall door to* KROGSTAD, *and shuts it behind him. He wears a traveling coat, high boots, and a fur cap.*)

SCENE VIII

NORA. KROGSTAD

NORA (*toward him*). Speak quietly. My husband is at home.

KROGSTAD. All right; I don't care.

NORA. What do you want of me?

KROGSTAD. An explanation of something.

NORA. Be quick, then. What is it?

KROGSTAD. You know I have received my dismissal.

NORA. I could not prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought to the last on your behalf, but without success.

KROGSTAD. Does your husband love you so little? He knows what it is that I can do to injure you, and yet he dares——

NORA. How could you think I should tell him?

KROGSTAD. Goodness me! I didn't think that, either. To

show so much manly courage did not look much like my fine Torvald Helmer.

NORA. Mr. Krogstad, I demand respect for my husband.

KROGSTAD. To be sure; all due respect. But since you, dear madam, are so anxious to keep the matter secret, I suppose I may venture to assume that you are a little clearer than you were yesterday as to what you have really done?

NORA. Clearer than *you* could ever make me.

KROGSTAD. Yes, such a bad lawyer as I am.

NORA. What is it you want?

KROGSTAD. Only to see how you were getting on, Mrs. Helmer. I have been thinking about you all day long. A cashier, a disgraced newspaper writer, a—in short, a creature like me, you know, has a little bit of what people call "heart."

NORA. Then show it; think of my little children.

KROGSTAD. Did you and your husband think of mine? But let's leave that alone. I only wanted to tell you that you needn't take this matter too seriously. I sha'n't be the first one to talk about it.

NORA. No; to be sure. I knew you wouldn't be.

KROGSTAD. It can be settled as amiably as possible. Nobody need know. It can remain among us three.

NORA. My husband is never to know anything about it.

KROGSTAD. How can you prevent that? Can you pay off the debt, eh?

NORA. No, not at once.

KROGSTAD. Or have you any means of raising the money in the next few days?

NORA. No means that I will make use of.

KROGSTAD. And if you had, it would be no good to you now. If you stood here with ever so much money in your hand you wouldn't get your I. O. U. back from me.

NORA. Tell me what you want to do with it.

KROGSTAD. I only want to keep it, to have it in my own hands. No stranger shall hear anything of it. If you were to form any desperate resolution——

NORA. That I shall do.

KROGSTAD. If you should think of leaving your husband and children——

NORA. That I shall do.

KROGSTAD. Or if you should think of doing something far worse——

NORA. How do you know that?

KROGSTAD. Never mind that.

NORA. How do you know I had that in my mind?

KROGSTAD. Most of us think of *that* as the first thing to do. I had thought of it too, but really had not the courage.

NORA (*voicelessly*). Nor I.

KROGSTAD (*relieved*). No, one hasn't. You had not the courage either, had you?

NORA. I hadn't, I hadn't.

KROGSTAD. Besides, it would be very silly. When the first storm is only over in the house . . . I have a letter in my pocket for your husband.

NORA. Telling him everything?

KROGSTAD. Sparing you as far as possible.

NORA (*quickly*). He shall never have that letter. Tear it up. I will get you the money somehow.

KROGSTAD. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer; but I believe I have already told you——

NORA. Oh, I'm not talking about the money I owe you. Tell me how large a sum you demand from my husband, and I will get it for you.

KROGSTAD. I demand no money from your husband.

NORA. What *do* you want, then?

KROGSTAD. I will tell you. I want to get on in the world, dear madam; I want to redeem my position in it. And your husband shall help me to do it. For the last eighteen months I have not been concerned in any dishonorable transaction; during that time I have been fighting against the most gloomy circumstances. I was content to work my way up, step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not satisfied to get employment again as a matter of favor. I mean to rise in the world, I tell you. . . . I will get into the bank again—and in a higher position than before. Your husband shall make a place on purpose for me.

NORA. He will never do that.

KROGSTAD. He will do it. I know him; he won't dare to refuse. And when I am once associated with him there you will soon see! Before a year is out I shall be the manager's

right hand. It won't be Torvald Helmer but Nils Krogstad who carries on the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA. You'll never get to that point.

KROGSTAD. Perhaps you would——

NORA. Yes; now I have the courage for it.

KROGSTAD. Oh, you don't frighten me. An elegant, spoiled lady like you——

NORA. You will see, you will see.

KROGSTAD. Under the ice, perhaps. Down into the black cold water. And then next spring be fished up on the shore, ugly, unrecognizable, with your hair all fallen out——

NORA. You don't frighten me.

KROGSTAD. Nor you me. People don't do things of that sort, Mrs. Helmer. And, after all, what would be the use of it? I have your husband so completely here in my pocket.

NORA. Even then still? When I am no longer——

KROGSTAD. Do you forget that your good name after death is in my hands? (NORA *stands speechless and looks at him.*) Well, now you are prepared. Do nothing foolish. So soon as Helmer has received my letter, I shall expect to hear from him. And bear in mind that it is your husband himself who has forced me back again into such paths. That I will never forgive him. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer (*goes through the hall*).

SCENE IX

NORA. *Then* MRS. LINDEN

NORA (*hurries to the door, opens it a little, and listens*). He is going. He is not putting the letter in the box. No, no, it would be quite impossible. (*Opens the door farther and farther.*) What does that mean? He is standing still, not going down the stairs. Is he thinking better of it? Would he? (*A letter falls into the box;* KROGSTAD'S *steps are then heard until lost in the distance down the stairs.* NORA, *with a suppressed cry, rushes through the room to the sofa table; short pause.*) In the letter box (*goes quietly and timidly to the door*). There it lies. Torvald, Torvald, now we are lost.

MRS. LINDEN (*with the costume from the left room*). Yes, now I have got it into nice order again. Should we just try it on?

NORA (*hoarsely and softly*). Christina, do come here.

MRS. LINDEN (*throws the dress on the sofa*). What's the matter? You look so disturbed.

NORA. Do come here. Do you see the letter? There, see, through the wire work of the letter box.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes; I see it.

NORA. That letter is from Krogstad.

MRS. LINDEN. Nora, it was Krogstad who lent you the money.

NORA. Yes; and now Torvald will know all about it.

MRS. LINDEN. Believe me, Nora, it is the best thing for you both.

NORA. You don't know all yet. I have forged a name.

MRS. LINDEN. Good heavens!

NORA. I only wanted to tell you that, Christina; you shall be my witness.

MRS. LINDEN. How "witness"? What am I to——

NORA. If I lose my mind, and that might easily happen.

MRS. LINDEN. Nora!

NORA. Or if any other blow should strike me—anything such as my not being here present.

MRS. LINDEN. Nora, Nora, you don't know what you're saying.

NORA. In case there were to be anybody who wanted to take the—the whole blame, I mean——

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes; but how can you think——

NORA. Then you will be able to bear witness that it is not true, Christina. I know very well what I am saying. I am in full possession of my senses, and I say to you: Nobody else knew anything about it; I alone have done everything. Don't forget that.

MRS. LINDEN. I won't forget it. But I haven't the remotest notion what it all means.

NORA. Oh, how should you? But a miracle will come to pass even yet.

MRS. LINDEN. A miracle?

NORA. Yes, a miracle; but it is so terrible, Christina. It must not happen for anything in the world.

MRS. LINDEN. I will go to Krogstad at once and talk to him.

NORA. Don't go to him. He will do you some injury.

MRS. LINDEN. There was a time when for love of me he would have done anything.

NORA. He?

MRS. LINDEN. Where does he live?

NORA. Oh, how can I tell? Yes (*feels in her pocket*); here, I have a card of his. But the letter, the letter.

SCENE X

THE PRECEDING. HELMER *outside*

HELMER (*in his room knocks at the door*). Nora!

NORA (*cries out anxiously*). Yes; what is it? What do you want with me?

HELMER. Well, well, don't be so frightened. We aren't coming in; you have bolted the door, you know. You are trying your dress on, I dare say.

NORA. Yes, yes; I am trying it on. It suits me so well, Torvald.

MRS. LINDEN (*who has read the card*). Then he lives close by here, at the corner?

NORA. Yes; but it's no use now. We are lost. The letter is actually in the box.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband has the key?

NORA. Always.

MRS. LINDEN. Krogstad must ask to have his letter back unread. He must make some excuse——

NORA. But this is the very time when Torvald generally——

MRS. LINDEN. Prevent him; go and stay with him all the time. I will come back as quickly as I can. (*She goes quickly away through the entrance door.*)

NORA (*goes to* HELMER'S *door, opens it, and peeps in*). Torvald.

SCENE XI

NORA. HELMER. *Then* RANK. *Later* MRS. LINDEN *and* ELLEN

HELMER (*in the back room*). Well, now may one come back into one's own room? Come, Rank, now we'll just have a look (*in the door*). But what is that?

NORA. What is what, Torvald, dear?

HELMER. Rank led me to expect a grand dress-transformation scene.

RANK (*in the door*). So I understood; I was mistaken too.

NORA. No; before to-morrow evening you will neither of you get any opportunity of admiring me.

HELMER. But, dear Nora, you look so tired. Have you been practicing too hard?

NORA. No, I haven't practiced at all yet.

HELMER. But you really must.

NORA. Yes, it is quite indispensable, Torvald. But without your help it won't go on well; I have forgotten everything.

HELMER. Oh, we'll soon freshen it all up again.

NORA. Yes, do help me, Torvald. You promised me you would, didn't you? Oh! I am so anxious about it. Before such a large party . . . this evening you must devote to me exclusively. No work allowed, no pen touched! Say "yes." Am I not right, Torvald?

HELMER. I promise you: all this evening I will be at your entire disposal. You little helpless thing—h'm, it is true; but I will first— (*Goes toward the hall door.*)

NORA. What do you want outside there?

HELMER. Only to see if any letters have come.

NORA. No, no, don't do that, Torvald.

HELMER. But why not?

NORA. Torvald, I beg you not to; there are none there.

HELMER. Let me just see (*will go*). (NORA, *at the piano, plays the first bars of the tarantella.* HELMER *standing still in the door.*) Ah!

NORA. I can't dance to-morrow if I don't practice with you first.

HELMER (*going to her*). Are you really so afraid, dear Nora?

NORA. Yes, so dreadfully afraid. Let me practice at once; we have a little time left before dinner. Oh! sit down here and accompany me, Torvald, dear; correct and teach me if I——

HELMER. With all the pleasure in life, since you wish it. (*He sits down to the piano.*)

NORA (*takes the tambourine, and a long gay shawl from the box, drapes herself with the shawl very rapidly, then with a bound comes to the front of the stage*). Now you play and I will dance. (HELMER *plays,* NORA *dances;* RANK *stands at the piano behind* HELMER *and watches.*)

HELMER (*playing*). Slower, slower!

NORA. I can't do it differently.

HELMER. Not so violently, Nora.

NORA. That is just its style.

HELMER (*stops*). No, no; it isn't right.

NORA (*laughs and swings the tambourine*). Didn't I tell you so?

RANK. I will accompany you a little.

HELMER (*rising*). Yes; do so; then I can correct her better. (RANK *sits down to the piano and plays.* NORA *dances more and more wildly.* HELMER *stands by the fire and addresses frequent remarks in correction during the dance. She seems not to hear them. Her hair gets loose and falls on her shoulders; she does not heed it, but goes on dancing.* MRS. LINDEN *enters.*)

MRS. LINDEN (*stands as though spellbound in the doorway*). Oh!

NORA (*dancing*). It is merry enough here, Christina.

HELMER. But, dearest Nora, you are dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

NORA. And so it is.

HELMER. Rank, just stop; this is the merest madness. . . . Stop, I say. (RANK *stops playing, and* NORA *comes to a sudden standstill.*)

HELMER (*going toward her*). I should never have believed it. You have positively forgotten the whole thing.

NORA (*throws the tambourine away*). You see for yourself.

HELMER. You really do want teaching.

NORA. Yes; now you see how needful it is. You must practice with me up to the last moment. Will you, Torvald?

HELMER. Certainly, certainly.

NORA. Neither to-day nor to-morrow must you think about anything but me; you must not open a single letter, not so much as the letter box.

HELMER. Oh, you are still afraid of that man.

NORA. Yes, I am.

HELMER. Nora, I can see it in your manner. There is a letter from him in the box now.

NORA. I don't know; I believe so. But you are not to read anything of that sort—nothing of a worrying kind must come between us until everything is over.

RANK (*softly to* HELMER). You mustn't contradict her.

HELMER (*putting his arm round her*). The child shall have her own way. But to-morrow night, when you have danced——

NORA. Then you will be free.

ELLEN (*in the left door*). Dinner is ready, ma'am.

NORA. We will have some champagne, Ellen.

ELLEN. Yes, ma'am (*goes*).

HELMER. Dear, dear, quite a banquet!

NORA. Yes, a champagne banquet until morning dawns. (*Calls out.*) And maccaroons, Ellen—plenty—a great many —just this once.

HELMER (*taking her hands*). Come, come, not this awful wildness. Be my gentle little lark once more.

NORA. Oh, yes, I will. But now go into the dining-room; and you too, Dr. Rank. Christina, you must help me to do my hair.

RANK (*softly as they go*). There is nothing in the wind? Nothing . . . I mean——

HELMER. Nothing whatever, my dear Rank. It is merely this babyish anxiety I was telling you about. (*Both go to the right.*)

NORA. Well?

MRS. LINDEN. He has gone out of town.

NORA. I saw it in your face.

MRS. LINDEN. He only returns to-morrow evening. I left a note for him there.

NORA. You should not have done that. You ought not to hinder anything. After all, there is something glorious in expecting a miracle to happen.

MRS. LINDEN. What do you expect, then?

NORA. Oh, you can't understand. Go to them in the dining-room; I'll come in a moment. (MRS. LINDEN *goes to the dining-room—right.*)

SCENE XII

NORA. *Then* HELMER

NORA (*stands a while as though collecting her thoughts. Then looks at her watch*). Five—seven hours before midnight. Then twenty-four hours before the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven. Still thirty-one hours to live.

HELMER (*in the right-hand door*). But where is my little lark?

NORA (*runs with open arms toward him*). Here she is.

ACT III

THE SAME ROOM

(*The table is in the middle, together with the chairs surrounding it. A lamp lit is on the table. The door to the hall stands open. Dance music is heard from overhead.*)

SCENE I

MRS. LINDEN *sits by the table and turns the pages of a book absently. She tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention; she frequently listens and looks anxiously toward the hall door. Then enter* KROGSTAD.

MRS. LINDEN (*looking at her watch*). Not here yet. And it is the latest time I mentioned. If he only doesn't . . . (*listens again*). Oh, there he is! (*She goes into the hall and opens the corridor door carefully; a light tread is heard on the steps. She whispers.*) Come in. Nobody is here.

KROGSTAD (*in the door-way*). I found a note from you at my house. What does that mean?

MRS. LINDEN. It is absolutely necessary I should speak with you.

KROGSTAD. Indeed? And was it absolutely necessary the interview should take place here?

MRS. LINDEN. It was impossible at my lodgings. I have no sitting-room to myself. Come in; we are quite alone. The servants are asleep, and the Helmers are at the ball next door.

KROGSTAD (*coming into the room*). Ah! what? The Helmers are dancing this evening? Really?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes. Why not?

KROGSTAD. Quite right. Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. And now, Mr. Krogstad, let us talk a little.

KROGSTAD. Have we anything left to say to each other?

MRS. LINDEN. We have a great deal to say.

KROGSTAD. I should not have thought so.

MRS. LINDEN. Because you have never really understood me.

KROGSTAD. Was there anything more to understand than what was clear as daylight? A heartless woman jilts a man when a better match offers itself.

MRS. LINDEN. Do you consider me so utterly heartless? Do you think I should have broken it off with a light heart?

KROGSTAD. Didn't you?

MRS. LINDEN. Did you really think that of me, Nils?

KROGSTAD. Then why did you write me such a letter as you wrote at the time?

MRS. LINDEN. I really could not do otherwise. Since I had to break with you, it surely was also my duty to destroy in your heart everything you felt for me.

KROGSTAD (*squeezing his hands together*). So that was it. And all—all for the sake of money only.

MRS. LINDEN. You ought not to forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We could not wait for you, Nils; at that time you had but poor prospects.

KROGSTAD. Very likely; but you had no right to turn me off for the sake of any other man.

MRS. LINDEN. Oh, I don't know. I have asked myself often enough since whether I had the right to do it.

KROGSTAD (*more gently*). When I had lost you, it seemed to me as though the very ground had sunk away from under my feet. Just look at me: I am a shipwrecked man on a raft now.

MRS. LINDEN. I should think some help was close at hand.

KROGSTAD. It *was* at hand; but then you came and stood in my way.

MRS. LINDEN. Without knowing it, Nils. It was only this morning I learned that it was your post I had got.

KROGSTAD. I believe you, since you say so. But now you do know it, do you mean to give it up?

MRS. LINDEN. No; for that would not help you in the least.

KROGSTAD. Oh, "help," "help." I should do it whether or no.

MRS. LINDEN. Life and hard, bitter necessity have taught me to act prudently.

KROGSTAD. And life has taught me not to trust fine speeches.

MRS. LINDEN. Then life has taught you a very sensible thing. But I suppose you do trust deeds?

KROGSTAD. What do you mean by that?

MRS. LINDEN. You said you were a shipwrecked man on a raft.

KROGSTAD. I have good reason to say so.

MRS. LINDEN. I too have suffered shipwreck, and am on a raft.

KROGSTAD. You made your own choice.

MRS. LINDEN. I had no choice at the time.

KROGSTAD. Well, what more?

MRS. LINDEN. Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could belong to each other?

KROGSTAD. What are you saying?

MRS. LINDEN. Two people have better chance of being saved on a raft than if each stays on his own.

KROGSTAD. Christina!

MRS. LINDEN. Why do you think I came here, to town?

KROGSTAD. Was it with some thought of me?

MRS. LINDEN. I must work in order to endure life. I have worked from my youth up, and work has been my one

best friend. But now I am quite alone in the world—so terribly empty and forsaken. There is no happiness in working for one's self. Nils, give me somebody and something to work for.

KROGSTAD. I don't believe a word of it. It is nothing but a woman's exaggerated notion of self-sacrifice.

MRS. LINDEN. Have you ever noticed any exaggeration in me?

KROGSTAD. What! You really could? Tell me, do you know my past?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And do you know my reputation?

MRS. LINDEN. Did you not hint it just now, when you said that with me you could have been another man?

KROGSTAD. I am perfectly certain of it.

MRS. LINDEN. Could it not yet be so?

KROGSTAD. Christina, do you say this after full deliberation? Yes, you do. I see it in your face. Then you really have the courage?

MRS. LINDEN. I need somebody to mother, and your children need a mother. We two are necessary to each other. Nils, I believe in the nobler part of your nature. With you I dare attempt anything!

KROGSTAD (*seizing her hands*). Thank you, thank you, Christina. Now I shall know how to set about raising myself in the eyes of others. Oh, but I forgot——

MRS. LINDEN (*listens*). Hush! the tarantella! Go, go.

KROGSTAD. Why, what is it?

MRS. LINDEN. Don't you hear the dancing overhead! When that is over, they will come back.

KROGSTAD. All right; I'll go. But it's too late now. Of course you don't know what it is I have set going against the Helmers?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, Nils, I know.

KROGSTAD. And nevertheless you have the courage to——

MRS. LINDEN. I can very well comprehend to what lengths despair may drive a man like you.

KROGSTAD. Oh, if I could but undo my share in it!

MRS. LINDEN. You can, for your letter lies there in the box.

KROGSTAD. Does it really?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; but——

KROGSTAD (*looking at her searchingly*). Is that the explanation of it? You wanted to save your friend at any price. Say it straight out. Is that the way the land lies?

MRS. LINDEN. Nils, a person who has once sold herself for the sake of others never does it again.

KROGSTAD. I will ask to have my letter back again.

MRS. LINDEN. No, no.

KROGSTAD. Yes; I shall stop here till Helmer comes. I shall ask to have my letter back; I shall tell him it merely relates to my dismissal, and that he had better not read it.

MRS. LINDEN. No, Nils, you must not ask for the letter back.

KROGSTAD. But tell me, wasn't that the very reason for your bidding me come here?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, in my first moment of terror. But since then more than twenty-four hours have gone by, and during that time I have heard things in this house that are beyond belief. Helmer must know everything; between those two there must be the completest possible understanding, and that can never come to pass while all these excuses and concealments are going on.

KROGSTAD. Very well, since you are so bold. But in any case, there is one thing I can do, and it shall be done at once.

MRS. LINDEN (*listens*). Make haste; go, go. The dance is over; we are not safe another moment.

KROGSTAD. I will wait for you in the street, in front here.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, do. You must take me home.

KROGSTAD. Oh! I never was so happy in all my life before. (*Goes. The door between the room and the hall remains open during the following.*)

SCENE II

MRS. LINDEN. *Then* HELMER *and* NORA

MRS. LINDEN (*sets the furniture a little straight and puts her walking things together*). What a change! what a happy change, to have somebody to work for, to live for! to bring loving order into a deserted home! Yes, that is what I will do. . . . If they came soon (*listens*). Ah, here they

are! Where are my things? (*Takes bonnet and cloak.* HELMER'S *and* NORA'S *voices are heard; a key is turned in the lock, and* HELMER *drags* NORA *almost violently into the hall. She wears the Italian costume with a large black shawl over it. He is in evening dress, with an open black domino.*)

NORA (*still in the door, struggling with him*). No, no, no; I won't go in; I want to go upstairs again. I don't want to leave the ball so early——

HELMER. But, dearest Nora——

NORA. Oh, I do beg you so imploringly, so earnestly, Torvald—only one more hour.

HELMER. Not another minute, Nora, dear. You know we settled it should be this way. Come, go into the room; you are catching cold here. (*He leads her gently into the room in spite of her resistance.*)

MRS. LINDEN. Good evening.

NORA. Christina!

HELMER. What, Mrs. Linden, you here so late?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, pardon me; I did so want to see Nora in her costume.

NORA. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes. Unfortunately I did not come early enough. You were already gone upstairs, and then I did not wish to go away again without seeing you.

HELMER (*taking* NORA'S *shawl off*). Well, then, just look at her, but quietly. I think she is worth looking at. Is she not beautiful, Mrs. Linden?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I must say——

HELMER. Is she not wonderfully lovely? That was the general opinion at the ball. But she is dreadfully obstinate—dear little creature! What is to be done with her? Will you believe it, I had almost to use force to get her away from the ball?

NORA. Oh, Torvald, you will be sorry you did not let me stop at least half an hour longer.

HELMER. There! you hear her, Mrs. Linden? She dances her tarantella, wins wild applause—which, however, was but due to her, although perhaps her rendering was a little too realistic; I mean . . . a little more than could be reconciled with the strict demands of art. But be that as it may, the chief thing was she got applauded, wildly applauded. Ought

I to have let her stay any longer, and weaken the impression? Not if I know it. I took my charming Capri maiden, I might say my capricious maiden from Capri, under my arm; a rapid turn round the room, bows from all sides, and, as they say in novels—the lovely apparition was gone. A departure should always be effective, Mrs. Linden; but I can't get Nora to see it. . . . By Jove, it's warm here. (*Throws his domino on a chair and opens the door to his room.*) What? It's very dark here. Yes, of course; pardon me. (*He goes inside and lights two candles.*)

NORA (*whispers quickly and breathlessly*). Well?

MRS. LINDEN (*softly*). I have spoken to him.

NORA. And——

MRS. LINDEN. Nora . . . You must tell your husband everything.

NORA. I knew it.

MRS. LINDEN. You have nothing to fear from Krogstad, but you must speak.

NORA. I shall not speak.

MRS. LINDEN. Then the letter will.

NORA. Thank you, Christina. Now I know what I must do. Hush!

HELMER (*coming back*). Well, Mrs. Linden, have you admired her?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; and now I will say good night.

HELMER. What, already? Does this knitting belong to you?

MRS. LINDEN (*taking it*). Yes, thanks; I was nearly forgetting it.

HELMER. Then you do knit?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. Do you know, you ought to crochet instead?

MRS. LINDEN. Indeed! Why?

HELMER. Because it looks better. Look now. You hold the crochet work in the left hand in this way, and then move the needle about with the right hand—in and out—in an easy, long-shaped bow, don't you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I dare say you do.

HELMER. While in knitting, on the contrary, it always looks ugly. Look now, your arms are bent tightly together, and the needles go up and down; there is something Chinese

in it. . . . Oh! that really was splendid champagne we had at the ball.

MRS. LINDEN. Now, good night, Nora, and don't be obstinate any more.

HELMER. Well said, Mrs. Linden.

MRS. LINDEN. Good night, Mr. Helmer.

HELMER (*going with her to the door*). Good night, good night. I hope you'll get safely home. I would gladly . . . but it really is not far for you. Good night, good night. (*She goes. He shuts the door behind her and comes to the front of the stage again.*)

SCENE III

HELMER. NORA

HELMER. There, now we've shut the door on her. She is an awful bore.

NORA. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

HELMER. No, not in the least.

NORA. Nor sleepy?

HELMER. Not a bit. On the contrary, I feel most lively. But you? Yes, you look really tired and sleepy.

NORA. Yes, I am very tired. I shall soon be asleep now.

HELMER. There now, you see. I was right, after all, in not stopping longer with you at the ball.

NORA. Oh, all is right that you do.

HELMER (*kisses her on the forehead*). That is my dear little lark speaking like a human being. Did you happen to notice, too, how merry Rank was this evening?

NORA. Oh, was he really? I had no opportunity of speaking with him.

HELMER. Nor had I, much; but I have not seen him in such good spirits for a long time. (*Looks at her for a little while, then comes nearer to her.*) H'm . . . but it is quite too supremely delightful to be back in our own home, for me to be quite alone with you. Oh, you enchanting, glorious woman!

NORA. Don't look at me in that way, Torvald.

HELMER. I am not to look at my dearest treasure?—all the glory that is mine, mine only, wholly and altogether mine.

NORA (*goes to the other side of the table*). You must not talk to me in that way this evening.

HELMER (*following her*). I see you have the tarantella still in your blood; and that makes you more enchanting than ever. Listen: the other guests are beginning to go now. (*More softly.*) Nora, soon all the house will be still.

NORA. I hope so.

HELMER. Yes; don't you, Nora, darling? Oh, do you know, when I go into society with you in this way, do you know why I speak so little to you, and keep at such a distance from you, and only steal a glance at you now and then—do you know why I do it? Because I am fancying that you are one whom I love in secret, that I am secretly betrothed to you, and that nobody guesses there is any particular understanding between us.

NORA. Yes, yes, yes; I know very well that all your thoughts are with me.

HELMER. And then, when we have to go home, and I put the shawl about your dear young shoulders, and this glorious throat of yours, I imagine you are my bride, and that we are coming straight from our wedding, and that I am bringing you for the first time to my home, and that I am alone with you for the first time, quite alone with you, you shy, beautiful thing! All this evening I was longing for you, and you only. When I watched you chasing and beckoning during the tarantella, it seemed to set my blood on fire; I could endure it no longer . . . and that's why I made you come home with me so early.

NORA. Go, now, Torvald; you must leave me alone. I don't want all that.

HELMER. What can you mean? You must be joking with me, my pet. You don't want . . . Am I not your husband? (*A knock.*)

NORA (*with a start*). Do you hear?

HELMER (*at the hall door*). Who is there?

SCENE IV

THE PRECEDING. RANK

RANK (*outside*). It is I. May I come in for a moment?

HELMER (*in a low tone, annoyed*). Oh, dear, what can

he want at this time of night? (*Aloud.*) Wait a little. (*Goes and opens the door.*) Come, it is nice of you not to pass by our door.

RANK. I thought I heard your voices, and that made me long just to look in. (*Glances rapidly round the room.*) Yes, here is the dear place I know so well! It is so quiet and comfortable here with you two.

HELMER. You seemed to enjoy yourself exceedingly upstairs too.

RANK. Exceedingly. Why should I not? Why shouldn't one get enjoyment out of everything in this world? At any rate as much and as long as one can. The wine was splendid.

HELMER. Especially the champagne.

RANK. Did you notice it too? It was perfectly incredible the quantity I contrived to drink.

NORA. Torvald drank a great deal of champagne this evening too.

RANK. Did he?

NORA. Yes; and after it he is always in such a good temper.

RANK. Well, why should one not have a merry evening after a well-spent day?

HELMER. Well spent? As to that I have not much to boast of.

RANK (*tapping him on the shoulder*). But I have, don't you see?

NORA. Then you have certainly been engaged in some scientific investigation, Dr. Rank.

RANK. Quite right.

HELMER. Just see! Nora talks about scientific investigations.

NORA. And am I to congratulate you on the result?

RANK. By all means you must.

NORA. Then the result was a good one.

RANK. The best possible, alike for the physician and the patient—namely, certainty.

NORA (*quickly and searchingly*). Certainty?

RANK. Complete certainty. Ought not I, upon the strength of it, to be very merry this evening?

NORA. Yes, you were quite right to be, Dr. Rank.

HELMER. I say the same—provided you don't have to pay for it to-morrow.

RANK. Well, in this life nothing is to be had for nothing.

NORA. Dr. Rank, I am sure you are very fond of masquerade balls.

RANK. When there are plenty of interesting masks present, I certainly am.

NORA. Listen, and tell me what we ought to appear as at our next masquerade.

HELMER. You giddy little thing, are you thinking already about your next ball?

RANK. We two? I will tell you. You must go as the lucky fairy.

HELMER. Yes; but think of a costume to suit the character.

RANK. Let your wife appear in her everyday dress.

HELMER. Very nicely said. But what character will you take?

RANK. I am perfectly clear as to that, my dear friend.

HELMER. Well?

RANK. At the next masquerade I shall appear invisible.

HELMER. What a comical idea!

RANK. Don't you know there is a big, black hat—haven't you heard stories of the hat that made people invisible? You pull it all over you, and then nobody sees you.

HELMER (*with a suppressed smile*). Oh, I dare say.

RANK. But I am quite forgetting why I came in here. Helmer, just give me a cigar—one of the dark Havanas.

HELMER. With the greatest pleasure (*hands him the case*).

RANK (*takes one and cuts the end off*). Thanks.

NORA (*hands him a fusee*). Here is a light.

RANK. A thousand thanks. (*She holds the match. He lights his cigar at it.*) And now good-bye.

HELMER. Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow.

NORA. Sleep well, Dr. Rank.

RANK. I thank you for that kind wish.

NORA. Wish me the same.

RANK. You? Very well, since you ask me to—sleep well. And thank you for the light. (*He nods to them both and goes.*)

SCENE V

HELMER. NORA. *Later* ELLEN

HELMER (*in an undertone*). He's been drinking a good deal to-night.

NORA (*absently*). I dare say. (HELMER *takes his bunch of keys from his pocket and goes into the hall.*) Torvald, what are you doing out there?

HELMER. I must empty the letter box—it is quite full; or to-morrow there will be no room for the newspapers.

NORA. Are you going to do some work now?

HELMER. Not very likely! What's this? Somebody's been at the lock.

NORA. The lock?

HELMER. Positively. What does it mean? I can't suspect that the servants . . . Here's a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours.

NORA (*quickly*). Then it must have been the children.

HELMER. Then you really must break them of such tricks. H'm, h'm. There! at last I've got it open. (*Takes the contents out and calls into the kitchen.*) Ellen, Ellen; just put the hall door lamp out. (*He returns to the room and shuts the door into the hall. With letters in his hand.*) Just see! only look how they have accumulated. (*Looks among them.*) What's that?

NORA (*at the window*). The letter! oh, no, no, Torvald!

HELMER. Two visiting cards—from Rank.

NORA. From Dr. Rank?

HELMER (*looking at them*). Rank, M. D. They were on the top. He must have just put them in.

NORA. Is there anything on them?

HELMER. Over the name there is a black cross. Look at it. That is a very ominous sign. Upon my word, it is as though he were announcing his own death.

NORA. So he is.

HELMER. What! do you know anything? did he tell you anything?

NORA. Yes. He said that when the card came it would mean he had taken leave of us. He means to shut himself up and die.

HELMER. Poor fellow! I did know that we should not be able to keep him much longer. But so soon! . . . And then he goes into his hiding-place like a wounded animal.

NORA. If it has to happen it is best for it to happen without words. Is it not, Torvald?

HELMER (*walking up and down*). He was so thoroughly intimate with us. I can hardly fancy our life without him. He and his troubles and loneliness formed a sort of cloudy background to our sunny happiness. Well, perhaps it is best so—for him, at any rate (*stands still*). And perhaps for us too. Now we two are thrown entirely upon each other. (*Puts his arm round her.*) My darling wife! it seems to me as if I could never hold you closely enough. Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, against which I could stake body and soul, and all, all else, for your dear sake.

NORA (*frees herself and says firmly and decidedly*). Now you shall read your letters, Torvald.

HELMER. No, no, not to-night. I want to stay with you, sweet wife.

NORA. With the thought of your friend's death?

HELMER. You are right, dear. It has shaken us both. Something unlovely has come between us: thoughts of death and dissolution. We must try to get rid of them. Till then —you go to bed, and I will go to my room a little.

NORA (*her arms round his neck*). Torvald, good night, good night.

HELMER (*kisses her on the forehead*). Good night, my little singing bird. Sleep well, Nora. Now I will go and read all my letters through. (*He goes with the bundle of letters into his room and shuts the door behind him.*)

NORA (*with wild glances, wanders round touching things, seizes* HELMER'S *domino, throws it over her, and whispers quietly, hoarsely, and brokenly*). Never see him again. Never, never, never. (*Throws her shawl over her head.*) And never see the children again. Not them either. Never, never. Oh, that black, icy water! Oh, that bottomless . . . Oh, if it were but over! Now he has it; now he is reading it. Oh, no, no; not yet. Torvald, good-bye, you and the children. (*She is rushing out through the hall; in the same*

moment HELMER *tears his door open and stands there with an open letter in his hand.*)

HELMER. Nora!

NORA (*crying aloud*). Ah!

HELMER. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA. Yes, I know. Let me go; let me go out.

HELMER (*holding her back*). Where do you want to go to?

NORA (*tries to get free*). You sha'n't save me, Torvald.

HELMER (*falling back*). True! is it true what he writes? Horrible! No, no; it is perfectly impossible; it cannot be true.

NORA. It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

HELMER. Don't come to me with silly excuses.

NORA (*a step nearer to him*). Torvald!

HELMER. You miserable creature—what have you done?

NORA. Let me go. You shall not suffer for it; you shall not take it upon yourself.

HELMER. Don't try any actress's tricks (*shuts the door to the hall*). Here you will stay and abide my judgment. Do you comprehend what you have done? Answer. Do you understand it?

NORA (*looks at him fixedly, and says with heightened expression*). Yes. Now I begin to understand it quite.

HELMER (*walking round*). Oh, what an awful awakening! During all these eight years—you who were my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar—aye, and worse, worse—a criminal. Oh! what an abyss of unloveliness it implies! Ugh! ugh! (NORA *is silent, and continues to look fixedly at him.* HELMER *continues standing before her.*) I ought to have guessed that something of the kind was sure to happen. I ought to have foreseen it. Your father's low principles—be silent!—your father's low principles you have inherited, every one of them. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty. Oh, how bitterly punished I am for ever having winked at his doings! I did it for your sake; and this the way you reward me.

NORA. Yes, just so.

HELMER. You have utterly destroyed my happiness; you

have annihilated my whole future. Oh, the thought of it is fearful! I find I am in the power of a human being who is devoid of conscience; he can do whatever he pleases with me, ask of me whatever he chooses, order me about and command me exactly as it suits him—I must put up with it in silence. . . . And I must sink in this pitiable way and go to ruin for the sake of an unprincipled woman.

NORA. When I am no more you will be free.

HELMER. No fine phrases, if you please. That's the kind of thing your father was always ready with. What sort of good would it do me if you were "no more," as you say? No good in the world! In spite of that he can publish the whole story; and if he does publish it, perhaps I should be suspected of having been a party to your criminal transactions. Perhaps people will think I was the originator, that I prompted you to do it. And for all this I have you to thank —you whom during the whole of our married life I have so cherished. Do you understand now what it is you have done to me?

NORA (*with cold calm*). Yes.

HELMER. It is so incredible that I can still hardly believe it. But I must come to some decision. Take that shawl off. Take it off, I say! I must try to pacify him in one way or the other. The story must be kept a secret, cost what it may. And as far as you and I are concerned, it must appear that we go on as we always have gone on. But of course only in the eyes of the world. Of course you will continue to live in the house; that is understood. But the children I shall not allow you to educate; I dare not trust them to you. . . . Oh, that I should have to say this to one whom I have so tenderly loved . . . whom I still . . . But that must be a thing of the past. Henceforward there can be no question of happiness, but merely of saving the ruins, the fragments, the appearance of it. (*A ring.* HELMER *recovers himself.*) What's that? So late! Can it be the most terrible thing of all? Can he?—hide yourself, Nora; say you are ill. (NORA *stands motionless.* HELMER *goes to the door and opens it.*)

ELLEN (*half undressed in the hall*). Here is a letter for mistress.

HELMER. Give it to me (*seizes the letter and shuts the door*). Yes, from him. You will not have it. I shall read it.

NORA. Read it.

HELMER (*by the lamp*). I have hardly courage to. Perhaps we are lost, both you and I. Ah! I must know (*tears the letter hastily open; looks at an inclosure; a cry of joy*). Nora! (NORA *looks interrogatively at him.*) Nora! Indeed, I must read it again. Yes, yes; it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

NORA. And I?

HELMER. You too, of course; we are both saved, you and I. Look here. He sends you back your acknowledgment of the debt; he writes that he regrets and laments—that a happy turn in his life— Oh, it can't matter to us what he writes. We are saved, Nora! Nobody has any hold over you. Oh, Nora, Nora! Ah, but first let us destroy all these horrible pieces of writing. . . . I'll just see, though (*glances at the I. O. U.*). No, I won't look at it; the whole thing shall be no more to me than a bad dream. (*Tears the I. O. U. and both the letters in two, throws them into the fire, and watches them burn.*) There, it has no further existence. He wrote that ever since Christmas Day you had been . . . Oh, Nora, they must have been three awful days for you!

NORA. I have fought a hard fight in the last three days.

HELMER. What tortures you must have suffered, without having any other means of escape than . . . but we won't think about those ugly things any more; we will only rejoice and repeat: It is all over, all over. Don't you hear? Somehow, Nora, you don't seem able to grasp it yet! Yes, it's over. Then what can be the meaning of this set look on your face? Oh, poor, dear Nora, I quite understand: you can't believe just yet that I have forgiven you. But I really have forgiven you, Nora; I swear it to you; I have forgiven you everything. I know so well you did it all out of love to me.

NORA. That is true.

HELMER. You loved me just as a wife should love her husband. It was only the means you could not judge rightly about. But do you think you are less dear to me for not knowing how to act alone? No, indeed; only lean on me; I will advise and guide you. I should be no true man if it were not just this woman's helplessness that makes you doubly attractive in my eyes. You must not dwell on the harsh words I spoke in my first moment of terror, when I believed

ruin was about to crush my very life out. I have forgiven you, Nora; I swear to you I have forgiven you.

NORA. I thank you for your forgiveness (*goes through the left door*).

HELMER. No, stay (*looks in*). What are you doing in the alcove?

NORA (*inside*). Taking off my masquerade dress.

HELMER (*in the open door*). Yes, do, dear; try to rest and restore your mind to its balance, my scared little song bird. You may go to rest in comfort; I have broad wings to protect you (*walks round by the door*). Oh, how beautiful and cozy our home is, Nora! Here you are safe; here I can shelter you like a hunted dove, whom I have saved from the claws of the hawk. I shall soon quiet your poor, beating heart. Believe me, Nora, gradually peace will return. To-morrow all this will look quite different to you; I shall not need to repeat over and over again that I forgive you: you will feel for yourself that it is true. How can you think I could ever bring my heart to drive you away, or even so much as reproach you? Oh, you don't know what a true man's heart is made of, Nora! A man feels there is something indescribably sweet and soothing in his having forgiven his wife, that he has honestly forgiven her from the bottom of his heart. She becomes his property in a double sense, as it were. She is as though born again; she has become to a certain extent at once his wife and his child. And that is what you shall really be to me henceforth, you ill-advised and helpless darling. Don't be anxious about anything, Nora: only open your heart to me, and I will be both will and conscience to you. Why, what's this? Not gone to bed? You have changed your dress.

NORA (*entering in her everyday dress*). Yes, Torvald; now I have changed my dress.

HELMER. But why, now it is so late?

NORA. I shall not sleep to-night.

HELMER. But, Nora, dear——

NORA (*looking at her watch*). It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. We two have much to say to each other (*she sits on one side of the table*).

HELMER. Nora, what does that mean? Your cold, set face!

NORA. Sit down; it will take some time. I have to talk over many things with you.

HELMER (*sitting opposite to her at the table*). Nora, you make me anxious . . . I don't in the least understand you.

NORA. Just so. You don't understand me. And in the same way I have never understood you till to-night. No, don't interrupt me. Only listen to what I say. . . . This is a breaking off, Torvald.

HELMER. How do you mean?

NORA (*after a short silence*). Does not one thing strike you as we sit here?

HELMER. What should strike me?

NORA. We have now been married eight years. Does it not strike you that to-night for the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, are speaking together seriously?

HELMER. Well; "seriously," what does that mean?

NORA. During eight whole years and more, since the day we first made each other's acquaintance, we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things.

HELMER. Ought I, then, to have persistently initiated you into difficulties you could not help me by sharing?

NORA. I am not talking of difficulties. All I am saying is, that we have never yet seriously talked any one thing over together.

HELMER. But, dearest Nora, would it have been any good to you if we had?

NORA. That is the very point. You have never understood me. . . . I have been greatly wronged, Torvald. First by father and then by you.

HELMER. What! by us two, by us two—who have loved you more deeply than all others have?

NORA (*shakes her head*). You two have never loved me. You only thought it was pleasant to be in love with me.

HELMER. But, Nora, these are strange words.

NORA. Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was still at home with father, he used to tell me all his views, and so of course I held the same views; if at any time I had a different view I concealed it, because he would not have liked people with opinions of their own. He used to call me his little doll, and play with me, as I in my turn used to play with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house.

HELMER. What expressions you do use to describe our marriage!

NORA (*undisturbed*). I mean—then I passed over from father's hands into yours. You settled everything according to your taste, or I did only what you liked; I don't exactly know. I think it was both ways, first one and then the other. When I look back on it now it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor man, only from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have sinned greatly against me. It is the fault of you two that nothing has been made of me.

HELMER. How senseless and ungrateful you are. . . . Haven't you been happy here?

NORA. No, never; I thought I was, but I never was.

HELMER. Not . . . not happy?

NORA. No; only merry. And you were always so friendly and kind to me. But our house has been nothing but a nursery. Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And my children were, in their turn, my dolls. I was exceedingly delighted when you played with me, just as the children were whenever I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald.

HELMER. There is some truth in what you say, exaggerated and overdrawn though it may be. But henceforth it shall be different. The time for play is gone by; now comes the time for education.

NORA. Whose education—mine or the children's?

HELMER. Yours, as well as the children's, dear Nora.

NORA. Oh, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being the right wife for you.

HELMER. And *you* say that?

NORA. And I—how have I been prepared to educate the children?

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. Did you not say just now yourself that *that* was a task you dared not intrust to me?

HELMER. In a moment of excitement. How can you lay any stress upon that?

NORA. No; you were perfectly right. For that task I am not ready. There is another which must be performed

first. I must first try to educate myself. In that you are not the man to help me. I must set to work alone: you are not the man to help me with it. I must do it alone. And that is why I am going away from you now.

HELMER (*jumping up*). What—what are you saying?

NORA. I must be thrown entirely upon myself if I am to come to any understanding as to what I am, and what the things around me are: so I cannot stay with you any longer.

HELMER. Nora, Nora!

NORA. I shall now leave your house at once. Christina will, I am sure, take me in for to-night——

HELMER. You are insane. I shall not allow that; I forbid it.

NORA. From this time it is useless for you to forbid me things. Whatever belongs to me I shall take with me. I will have nothing from you either now or later on.

HELMER. What utter madness this is!

NORA. To-morrow I shall go home—I mean to my birthplace. There it will be easier for me to get something to do of one sort or another.

HELMER. Oh, you blind, inexperienced creature!

NORA. I must try to gain experience, Torvald.

HELMER. To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! And only think what people will say about it.

NORA. I cannot take that into consideration. I only know that to go is necessary for me.

HELMER. Oh, it drives one wild! Is this the way you can evade your holiest duties?

NORA. What do you consider my holiest duties?

HELMER. Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

NORA. I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER. No, you have not. What duties do you mean?

NORA. Duties toward myself.

HELMER. Before all else you are a wife and mother.

NORA. I no longer think so. I think that before all else I am a human being just as you are, or at least I will try to become one. I know very well that most people agree with you, Torvald, and what is to be found in books. But I cannot be satisfied any longer with what most people say, and

with what is in books. I must think over things for myself, and try to get clear about them.

HELMER. Is it possible you are not clear about your position in your own family? Have you not in questions like these a guide who cannot err? Have you not religion?

NORA. Oh, Torvald, I don't know what religion is.

HELMER. What are you saying?

NORA. I know nothing but what our clergyman told me when I was confirmed. He explained that religion was this and that. When I have got quite away from here, and am all by myself, then I will examine that matter too. I will see whether what our clergyman taught is true; or, at any rate, whether it is true for me.

HELMER. Who ever heard such things from a young wife's lips? But if religion cannot lead you to the right, let me appeal to your conscience; for I suppose you have some moral feeling? Or, answer me, perhaps you have none?

NORA. Well, Torvald, I think I had better not answer you. I really don't know. About those things I am not at all clear. I only know that I have quite a different opinion about them from yours. I have now learned too that the laws are different from what I thought they were, but I can't convince myself that they are right. It appears that a woman has no right to spare her father trouble when he is old and dying, or to save her husband's life. I don't believe that.

HELMER. You talk like a child. You don't understand the society in which you live.

NORA. No, no more I do. But now I will set to work and learn it. I must make up my mind whether society is right or whether I am.

HELMER. Nora, you are ill, you are feverish; I almost think you are out of your senses.

NORA. I never felt so clear and certain about things as I feel to-night.

HELMER. And feeling clear and certain, you forsake husband and children?

NORA. Yes; I do.

HELMER. Then there is only one possible explanation of it.

NORA. What is that?

HELMER. You no longer love me.

NORA. No; that is just the thing.

HELMER. Nora! . . . Can you bring yourself to say so?

NORA. Oh, I'm so sorry, Torvald; for you have always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I do not love you any longer.

HELMER (*keeping his composure with difficulty*). Is this another of the things you are clear and certain about?

NORA. Yes, quite. That is why I will not stay here any longer.

HELMER. And can you also explain to me how I have lost your love?

NORA. Yes, I can. It was this evening when the miracle did not happen; for it was then I saw you were not the man I had taken you for.

HELMER. Explain yourself more; I don't understand.

NORA. I have waited so patiently all these eight years; for, indeed, I saw well enough that miracles do not happen every day. Then this trouble broke over my head, and then I was so firmly convinced that now the miracle must be at hand. When Krogstad's letter lay in the box outside, the thought never once occurred to me that you could allow yourself to submit to the conditions of such a man. I was so firmly convinced that you would say to him, "Pray make the affair known to all the world"; and when that had been done——

HELMER. Well? And when I had given my own wife's name up to disgrace and shame!

NORA. When that had been done, then you would, as I firmly believed, stand before the world, take everything upon yourself, and say, "I am the guilty person."

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. You mean I should never have accepted such a sacrifice from you? No; certainly not. But what would my assertions have been worth compared with yours? That was the miracle that I hoped and feared. And it was to hinder that that I wanted to put an end to my life.

HELMER. I would gladly work for you, day and night, Nora; bear sorrow and trouble for your sake, but no man sacrifices his honor to a person he loves.

NORA. That is what millions of women have done.

HELMER. Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA. Very likely. But you neither think nor speak like the man I could be one with. When your terror was over—not for what threatened *me,* but for what involved *you* —and when there was nothing more to fear, then it was in your eyes as though nothing whatever had happened. I was just as much as ever your lark, your doll, whom you would take twice as much care of in future because she was so weak and frail (*stands up*). Torvald, in that moment it became clear to me that I had been living here all these years with a strange man and had borne him three children. Oh, I cannot bear to think of it. I could tear myself to pieces!

HELMER (*sadly*). I see it, I see it: a chasm has opened between us. . . . But, Nora, can it never be filled up?

NORA. As I now am I am no wife for you.

HELMER. I am strong enough to become another man.

NORA. Perhaps when your doll is taken away from you.

HELMER. Part—part from you! No, Nora, no; I cannot grasp it.

NORA (*going into the right room*). The more reason for it to happen. (*She comes in with her walking things, and a small traveling bag, which she puts on the chair by the table.*)

HELMER. Nora, Nora, not now. Wait till to-morrow.

NORA (*putting on her cloak*). I cannot spend the night in the house of a man who is a stranger to me.

HELMER. But can't we live here as brother and sister?

NORA (*tying her bonnet tightly*). You know quite well that would not last long (*puts her shawl on*). Good-bye, Torvald. I will not see the children before I go. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I now am I can be nothing to them.

HELMER. But later, Nora—later on?

NORA. How can I tell? I have no idea what will become of me.

HELMER. But you are my wife—both as you are now and as you will become.

NORA. Listen, Torvald. When a wife leaves her husband's house, as I am doing, then I have heard he is free from all duties toward her in the eyes of the law. At any rate, I release you from all duties. You must feel yourself

no more bound by anything than I feel. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. There, there is your ring back. Give me mine.

HELMER. That too?

NORA. That too.

HELMER. Here it is.

NORA. Very well. Yes; now it is all past and gone. Here, I lay the keys down. The maids know how to manage everything in the house far better than I do. To-morrow, when I have started on my journey, Christina will come, in order to pack up the few things that are my own. They will be sent after me.

HELMER. Past and gone! Nora, will you never think of me again?

NORA. Certainly. I shall think very often of you and the children and this house.

HELMER. May I write to you, Nora?

NORA. No, never. You must not.

HELMER. But I may send you what——

NORA. Nothing, nothing.

HELMER. Help you when you are in need?

NORA. No, I say. I take nothing from strangers.

HELMER. Nora, can I never become to you anything but a stranger?

NORA (*taking her traveling bag sadly*). The greatest miracle of all would have to happen then, Torvald.

HELMER. Tell me what the greatest miracle is.

NORA. We both should need to change so, you as well as I, that—oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in anything miraculous.

HELMER. But I believe in it. Tell me. We must so change that——

NORA. That our living together could be a marriage. Good-bye. (*She goes out through the hall.*)

HELMER (*sinks in a chair by the door with his hands before his face*). Nora, Nora! (*He looks round and stands up.*) Empty. She isn't here now. (*A hope inspires him.*) The greatest miracle! (*Below stairs a door is heard shutting ominously in the lock.*)

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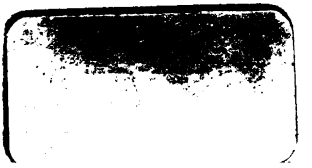

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